

**Domestic violence prevention for children: an
evaluation of a primary school based programme**

by

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ABSTRACT

Domestic violence is a phenomenon which affects a significant proportion of children across the globe. In response to its extensive scale and social consequences primary prevention emerged as a key strategy to end domestic violence. A recent shift in UK government policy resulted in statutory relationships education, for all children in primary schools in England and Wales from September 2020. As prevention education on domestic violence would be located within the relationships education curriculum this is a significant development, yet very little evidence exists regarding the effectiveness of interventions for younger children which tackle the range of issues within relationships education. This study aims to address this gap by providing evidence of the effectiveness and acceptability of a programme currently being delivered to children aged 10 to 11 in London primary schools.

Eighty children participated in this mixed-method evaluation across three London primary schools: pre and post programme surveys explored children's knowledge of programme topics and a six month follow up survey data tested for longer term effects. Observations of programme delivery examined children's and adults' reactions, comments and behaviours. Focus groups including 29 children, and interviews with six programme facilitators, three teachers and four parents explored perceptions of the programme and its impact.

Drama-based activities emerged as an important factor in children's engagement. Programme topics were acceptable to most children, although a minority expressed discomfort around material on sexual abuse. Improved relationships were reported amongst children in one school following the programme. Most children held existing positive attitudes in relation to: gender equality; managing conflict; peer pressure; seeking help. Improvements in attitudes were perceptible in relation to: breaking promises to friends; challenging adult authority; good and bad touch.

Feminist and childhood sociological theories enabled school-based prevention programmes to be conceptualised as a tool for the empowerment of children by encouraging them to recognise and assert their rights and to actively seek support in the context of child-adult power relations. Understandings of children as dynamic social actors require programmes to employ participatory approaches which appeal to children in their current, rather than future lives. Adopting a whole-school approach through the engagement of all members of the school community would be a consequence and means of developing readiness for effective school-based prevention work.

Contents

Acknowledgements	1
List of tables and figures	2
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	3
Introduction	3
Purpose of the study	3
Background to the research	6
<i>Personal motivation</i>	6
<i>Focusing on prevention in primary schools</i>	7
Legal and policy context for school-based work in England	7
<i>National policy agendas in respect of bullying and sex education</i>	8
<i>History of sex and relationships education in England and Wales</i>	10
<i>The role of the school system</i>	11
Programme Origins and Ownership	13
<i>A programme for primary schools: moving from domestic violence to 'healthy relationships'</i> ...	14
Methodological approach	16
<i>Research aims</i>	18
<i>Summary of study methods</i>	18
Thesis outline	19
<i>Note on terminology</i>	21
Summary of Introduction Chapter	22
CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE	23
Introduction	23
<i>Searching the literature</i>	23
Prevention in social policy	24
<i>Defining prevention</i>	24
<i>Public health model</i>	25
<i>Prevention science model</i>	26
Preventing domestic violence	29
<i>Addressing the problem: feminist discourses of gender inequality</i>	29
<i>Gender as obscured in prevention programmes</i>	29
The broadening scope of programmes	31
<i>Bullying, peer violence and cyberbullying prevention</i>	32
<i>Child sexual abuse prevention</i>	35

<i>Integrated prevention programmes</i>	37
Target audiences for prevention programmes	38
<i>Theorising children and childhood</i>	38
Preventing domestic violence through school-based work	42
<i>Feminist theory and schools</i>	42
Mechanisms and processes	45
<i>Theoretical frameworks for change</i>	45
<i>Social norms theory</i>	46
<i>Social learning theory</i>	47
<i>Learning through drama</i>	47
Empirical studies of school-based domestic violence prevention programmes	49
Theoretical frameworks informing the study	52
<i>Drawing on feminist theory and sociology of childhood to inform the research design</i>	52
<i>Consideration of theoretical frameworks to inform school-based prevention programmes</i>	53
Summary of Literature Review Chapter	55
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH	57
Introduction	57
Research questions	57
Research design	58
<i>Consideration of feminist methodology</i>	58
<i>Rationale for doing mixed methods research</i>	61
Selecting the programme for study	63
Research process	64
Designing the research tools	64
<i>Children's survey</i>	64
<i>Children's focus groups</i>	68
<i>Non-participant observation</i>	70
<i>Individual interviews</i>	71
Piloting the research tools	72
Reflections on the research design process	73
Ethical framework	74
Conducting the research	77
<i>Reflexivity</i>	77
<i>Sampling</i>	78
<i>Accessing the schools</i>	79
<i>How schools selected children for the programme</i>	80

<i>Meeting the children</i>	80
Collecting the data	82
<i>Children's surveys</i>	82
<i>Observations</i>	84
<i>Children's focus groups</i>	85
<i>Adult interviews</i>	87
<i>Facilitator interviews</i>	87
<i>Parent interviews</i>	88
<i>Teacher interviews</i>	88
Approach to data analysis	89
<i>Quantitative data</i>	89
<i>Qualitative data</i>	90
Reflections on the research process and setting	90
Limitations	91
Methodology Chapter Summary	92
CHAPTER FOUR: WHAT DO CHILDREN LEARN? SURVEY FINDINGS	94
Introduction	94
Missing data	94
Children's attributes	95
Children's learning	96
<i>Gender equality</i>	97
<i>Communication and managing conflict</i>	103
<i>Peer pressure and sexual bullying</i>	106
<i>Staying safe from sexual abuse</i>	111
<i>Help seeking</i>	119
<i>Supporting peers</i>	123
Overview of children's learning	129
Children's satisfaction with the programme	130
Children's reflections on programme impact	133
Key Survey Findings	137
CHAPTER FIVE: CHILDREN'S RESPONSES TO SCHOOL-BASED PROGRAMMES	139
Introduction	139
Children's responses and engagement	140
<i>Programme content</i>	140
<i>Methods of delivery</i>	147
<i>Programme structure and process</i>	159

Programme impact	168
<i>Improved knowledge and awareness</i>	168
<i>Improved skills, confidence and relationships</i>	184
Children’s Focus Group Findings Chapter Summary	188
CHAPTER SIX: ADULTS’ VIEWS OF SCHOOL-BASED PROGRAMMES	190
Introduction	190
Programme structure and process	190
<i>Process of programme implementation</i>	190
<i>Informing parents</i>	194
<i>Peer group setting</i>	198
<i>Length of the programme</i>	200
<i>Teachers’ roles</i>	204
Programme outcomes and impact	210
<i>Disclosures</i>	210
<i>Programme content</i>	213
<i>Methods of delivery</i>	215
<i>Facilitator competencies</i>	218
<i>Children’s learning</i>	219
<i>Improved relationships within the classroom</i>	222
<i>Sustaining programme messages</i>	225
Adult Interview Findings Summary	230
CHAPTER SEVEN: DISCUSSION	232
Introduction	232
Outcomes and impact: what do younger children learn?	233
<i>Tackling Gender</i>	234
<i>Other key changes in knowledge and awareness</i>	236
<i>Changes in affective learning</i>	240
Mechanisms and processes: how can impact be achieved for younger children?	241
<i>Children as active learners</i>	241
<i>Situating programme content in children’s experience</i>	247
<i>Peer group setting</i>	253
<i>Facilitator skills</i>	255
<i>Programme length</i>	256
Conditions for effective implementation: schools’ readiness	257
<i>Readiness of schools for programme implementation</i>	257
<i>Working in partnership with teachers</i>	259

<i>Engaging with parents</i>	261
<i>The impact of the public health model of prevention</i>	262
Contribution of key findings to theoretical knowledge	264
Discussion Chapter Summary	268
CHAPTER EIGHT: CONCLUSION	270
Introduction	270
Summary of key research findings	271
<i>Can prevention programmes improve younger children's knowledge and skills to recognise different forms of violence?</i>	271
<i>How can impact be achieved for younger children?</i>	272
<i>'Readiness' for effective implementation of programmes: engaging with children, parents and teachers</i>	274
Implications for policy and practice	275
<i>Government policy level: readiness</i>	275
<i>Government policy level: content</i>	277
<i>Practice level: readiness within schools</i>	277
<i>Practice level: content</i>	279
The task ahead: implications for future research	280
Reflecting on my experience of undertaking this study	282
Reporting back	284
Concluding comment	285
Reference List	286
Appendices	302

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List of tables and figures

Table 3.1	Number of children who completed the surveys
Figure 3.1	Survey response rate
Table 3.2	Number of participants in children's focus groups
Table 3.3	Adults' interviews
Table 4.1	Missing data
Table 4.2	If a girl has a boyfriend she shouldn't spend lots of time with her own friends
Table 4.3	Mums and Dads should both be able to have a job if they want to
Table 4.4	Shouting is the only way to sort out an argument
Table 4.5	If someone is bullying me I should keep quiet about it
Table 4.6	If a friend tells you to do something you always have to do it
Table 4.7	It's ok to say 'stop' if I don't like how close someone comes to me
Table 4.8	I can trust my feelings about whether the way someone touches me is good or bad
Table 4.9	If a grown up tells you to do something you always have to do it
Table 4.10	If you have a secret that upsets you but an adult doesn't listen you should find someone else to tell
Table 4.11	When a child is feeling unsafe there are lots of places they might get help
Table 4.12	You always have to keep secrets
Table 4.13	If a friend is feeling very upset about something it's right to tell their secret to an adult you trust
Table 4.14	Survey items
Figure 4.1	Did you enjoy taking part in the programme?
Figure 4.2	Is there anything you would like to change?
Figure 4.3	Did you talk to your friends afterwards?
Figure 4.4	Do you think the programme has helped you?

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Domestic violence is a widespread, global phenomenon, and prevention is advocated as a core strategic response (Hester and Lilley, 2014). Primary prevention as a key element in public health approaches to ending domestic violence is implemented through education, first by raising awareness among the general population via media campaigns, and second through school-based work. To date, the most rigorous studies of school-based preventive programmes have been undertaken in North America where most interventions are delivered to adolescents in secondary schools (Belknap et al., 2013; Black, 2012; Foshee et al., 2012; Taylor et al., 2010). A review conducted by Stanley et al. (2015) identified effectiveness of school-based programmes to be associated with a school's 'readiness' to introduce preventive interventions which need to be supported across the whole school. Authenticity emerged as a key ingredient for achieving impact. Teachers were identified as well placed to embed interventions, although appropriate training to deliver preventive education emerged as essential and teachers could be supported by those with specialist knowledge in domestic violence (Stanley et al., 2015). Although the review identified that programmes were increasingly being developed and delivered to younger children in primary schools across the UK (Datta et al., 2005; Ellis, 2006; Hale et al., 2012; Manship and Perry, 2012; Reid Howie Associates, 2002), there is a lack of evidence of the effectiveness of programmes for children under the age of 11; the review identified only four programmes aimed exclusively at primary school children, and three of those evaluations reported little or no data (Stanley et al., 2015). The current study provides evidence of the impact and experiences of one prevention programme covering different forms of violence, including domestic violence, targeted at primary school children aged 10 and 11 in England. In doing so, this research contributes to the underdeveloped body of knowledge in the UK context regarding such programmes targeted at younger children.

Purpose of the study

Domestic violence is a serious and endemic problem worldwide. Apart from being a violation of human rights, the consequences of domestic violence are profoundly damaging to the physical, sexual, emotional, mental and social well-being of individuals and families

(WHO, 2010). Historically, there has been much debate around what domestic violence is and how it might be defined, with classifications varying between agencies such as Government, Police and Crown Prosecution Service (Walby and Towers, 2017). In 2004, the government in England and Wales introduced a single definition to replace those previously in use across government and the public sector. In 2013, this definition of domestic violence and abuse was widened to include young people aged 16 to 17, in response to a consultation which '*saw respondents call overwhelmingly*' for this change to increase recognition that significant numbers of young people in this age group experience domestic violence (Home Office, 2013:2). Domestic violence is currently defined by the Home Office as:

Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. The abuse can encompass, but is not limited to: psychological, physical, sexual, financial, emotional. (Home Office, 2013).

Despite an increased consensus regarding the term 'domestic violence', it is nonetheless criticised for its gender neutrality, as well as its association with physical acts concurrent with the term 'violence' (Holt et al., 2008). Although often used simultaneously, the term 'domestic abuse' implies a wider range of harmful behaviours including psychological, verbal, emotional, sexual, economic, as well as physical. Additionally, 'domestic' implies the physical private space of the home, rather than the nature of the 'intimate' relationship between current or former partners. Regardless of these issues, 'domestic violence' is a commonly used and understood term (Stanley, 2011) to describe the harmful behaviour which occurs within this context (see the note at the end of this chapter on terminology).

The problem of domestic violence, which is overwhelmingly endured by women at the hands of men, is confirmed by official data reproduced annually worldwide. Globally, 1 in 3 women has been a victim of violence by an intimate partner (Butchart and Mikton, 2014). In the UK, an average of 1 in 4 women have experienced domestic violence, whilst a woman is killed by her male partner or former partner every four days (Long et al., 2017). Recent findings from the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) estimate that in the year ending March 2018, two million adults aged 16 to 59 years had experienced domestic violence and women were more likely to experience this form of abuse than men (ONS, 2018). However, the under reporting and under recording of such data means that official data does not provide a full representation of the extent of such violence (ONS, 2018).

Although population-based surveys show that a significant proportion of men report physical abuse from an intimate partner (ONS, 2018), in depth studies of female-to-male partner violence report that men experience violence less frequently than women, are less likely to be harmed by violence and do not report living in fear of their partner (Hester, 2013). Furthermore, the motive for violence reported by men against women, may be in part the result of women acting in self-defence (Hird, 2000; Williams et al., 2008). Feminist analyses have been critical in exposing the extent to which men's violence towards women is an outcome of, and reinscribed by, gender inequality (Radford, 1991). In centring women's own accounts of their experiences, feminist discourses have reconceptualised understandings of domestic violence, not as an issue located within individual or family pathology, but within the social constructs of differential power relations which accord men the greatest access to power. Through the politicisation of domestic violence, men's violence against women (and children), once considered a 'private' issue within the patriarchal family (Parton, 2006), has been made visible and brought into the public sphere.

As a result of in-depth empirical research, a focus on the prevalence and impact of domestic violence on children, who were once perceived to be 'hidden victims' or 'silent witnesses' (McIntosh, 2003), began to emerge. Since the late 1980s, shifting discourses of children as social agents, who both influence and are influenced by their circumstances, has meant that children are no longer considered to be disconnected from the impact of violence between their parents. A review conducted by Holt et al. (2008) on the impact of domestic violence found that children can be significantly affected by exposure to domestic violence, and that the effects can endure even after measures to ensure their physical safety are in place. For example, as a consequence of experiencing domestic violence in their homes, children are at increased risk of experiencing emotional, physical and sexual abuse and neglect, of developing emotional and behavioural problems, and being exposed to further adversities in their lives. Furthermore, children are potentially at risk of engaging in higher levels of aggression as well as rationalising abusive behaviour where this may occur in their future lives, lending support to the intergenerational transmission of violence theory and the assertion that witnessing and experiencing domestic violence in childhood leads to a greater use and tolerance of violence as an adult (Holt et al., 2008). In recognising the impact of domestic violence on children, a developing body of research forefronting children's own accounts (Evang and Øverlien, 2015; Katz, 2016; Mullender et al., 2002; Øverlien, 2016), has emphasised children's agency and experiences of living with domestic violence, and the

importance of including children in research in order to challenge notions of children as passive victims of the violence which occurs in their parents' relationship.

In acknowledging the extensive scale and consequences of this epidemic, domestic violence has been criminalised in many countries across the world, and yet efforts to prevent it from occurring in the first place are lagging (WHO, 2010). Primary prevention is understood as crucial to the ambition of reducing not only the magnitude of human suffering, but also the economic and health service costs which occur as a result of domestic violence. For example, in the United Kingdom, it is estimated that the annual cost of domestic violence to the economy is approximately £16 billion (Walby, 2009). Feminist research has maintained that the key to preventing domestic violence lies in changing the attitudes and behaviour conducive to this form of violence (Hester and Westmarland, 2005). Consequently, anxieties and concerns over the high social and economic costs, alongside the negative repercussions of children's exposure to violence, as well as the need to change attitudes and awareness within the general population, means that there exists a demand for universal prevention strategies as an approach to ending domestic violence.

Background to the research

Personal motivation

The motivation for this research stems from my longstanding interest in the needs and experiences of children who have lived with trauma, dating back to my work early in my career as a residential support worker and subsequently as a researcher in the field of social work. Between 2013 and 2014, based in the School of Social Work, University of Central Lancashire (UCLan), I worked on a research study funded by the National Institute for Health Research: the Preventing Domestic Abuse for Children and Young People (PEACH) study which aimed to identify and collate evidence relating to preventive interventions on domestic abuse for children and young people in the general population (Stanley et al., 2015). The research was based on the premise that although interventions aiming to prevent domestic abuse have been developed and widely implemented both in the UK and internationally, few had been rigorously evaluated for their effectiveness. The PEACH study included a systematic review of the international literature, including a review of the UK Grey literature, consultation with stakeholders including young people, experts from education, policy and practice and a mapping survey which aimed to build a picture of

practice across 18 selected local authority areas in the UK. From this study, it was identified that interventions aiming to prevent domestic abuse were being widely developed and implemented in primary and secondary schools across the UK, yet most studies focused on young people in secondary education. Very few primary school programmes had been evaluated for their effectiveness and the evidence base for the impact of prevention work in primary schools was found to be limited (Stanley et al., 2015). My knowledge acquired through my work on the PEACH study, including an overview of the literature and interventions in this field, has been used as a starting point to inform the current research.

Focusing on prevention in primary schools

During my PhD study, a shift in UK government policy meant that statutory relationships education for all children in primary schools in England would come into effect from September 2020 (DfE, 2018). Yet, despite this recent change, there remains very little evidence about the effectiveness of programmes for younger children which tackle the wider range of issues within relationships education including domestic violence prevention; as a result of the rapidly changing UK policy context, there is now a pressing need for evidence-based education in this area. The development of prevention policy in England and Wales, and the role of the education system is considered below.

Legal and policy context for school-based work in England

The UK government is a signatory to international conventions, which secure the rights of women and children and provides a legal imperative for prevention work in schools. These include the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and the Council of Europe: Istanbul Convention (2014); the UK is a signatory of the Istanbul Convention and although not yet ratified, a Bill passed in Parliament in 2017 signals its intention to do so. This legislation set out the government's obligations to support schools through prevention work. For example, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child states that:

States Parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and *educational* measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence... (UNCRC, 1989 Article 19; 1, emphasis added)

Such *protective* measures should, as appropriate, include *effective procedures for the establishment of social programmes* to provide necessary support for the child... (UNCRC, 1989: Article 19; 2, emphasis added)

Articles 13 and 17 refer to the child's right to access relevant information, particularly Article 17 which stipulates that:

'...the child has *access to information and material*...especially those aimed at the promotion of his or her social, spiritual and moral well-being and physical and mental health. (UNCRC, 1989: Article 17, emphasis added)

However, the translation of international conventions into local practice is not unproblematic and the means and routes by which broad abstract statements are translated into policy and practice is complex.

National policy agendas in respect of bullying and sex education

Anti-bullying work is well established in UK schools and the recognition of the profoundly negative impact that bullying has both on the individuals involved and the responsibilities of schools to respond predates work in schools on interpersonal violence. Changes in policy were first set out in England in the School Standards Framework Act (1998) stating that: 'Head teachers in state schools have a duty to encourage good behaviour and respect for others on the part of pupils and, in particular, prevent all forms of bullying among pupils' (SSFA, 1998). This legal duty for schools to prevent bullying was further developed in the Education and Inspections Act (2006) and schools are consequently required to have policies and practices to prevent bullying. School bullying research has since 'led the way [and has] matured and developed into a large scale international programme, with a vast amount of research evidence and well-developed interventions' (Monks and Coyne, 2011: 232).

Within a national context, the prevention of domestic violence, particularly through school-based work, has emerged in English policy over the last 15 years (Home Office, 2003) and has been increasingly recognised as important in national policy agendas. In July 2009, the Department for Children Schools and Families (DCSF) established a Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) advisory group to explore how to effectively tackle the issue as part of the cross government VAWG strategy. This led to the publication of '*Together We Can End Violence Against Women and Girls: A strategy*' in November 2009 which included a commitment to prevention work in schools. The document emphasised that:

‘Schools and colleges have a crucial role to play in helping children and young people to develop healthy relationships...all children should be taught about VAWG and all schools, including faith and primary schools, should be involved’ (Home Office, 2009: 6)

This was followed by a guidance document for all schools, developed through the government funded ‘Safe to Learn’ anti-bullying programme (DCSF, 2009) setting out how schools can prevent and respond to sexist, sexual, homophobic and racial bullying. In February 2010, the Government launched the ‘This is Abuse’ media campaign, aimed at raising awareness of teenage intimate partner abuse, with a second campaign launched in 2012, focusing on the prevention of rape among young people, and repeated again in 2013.

In March 2010, a report was published in response to the VAWG advisory group (DCSF, 2010) recommending statutory guidance for schools on how to address issues relating to VAWG, whilst the government simultaneously set out its commitment for the subject of Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE¹) to become part of the statutory national curriculum (discussed further below in the section *‘History of sex and relationships education in England and Wales’*). However, a change in government in May 2010 led to a substantial shift in policy priorities, particularly in relation to work in schools. Although the prevention of domestic violence in England remained a key part of the national strategy (HM Government, 2013; Home Office, 2014), the broader commitment of the new Conservative/Liberal Democrat Coalition Government to the deficit reduction programme meant that funding for potential programmes of work was limited. Furthermore, the plan for statutory PSHE was put on hold as recommended by Ofsted (2013) and under the new 2015 Conservative government, the former Education Secretary affirmed that PSHE would not be made compulsory due to *‘the variable quality of its provision’* (DfE, 2016).

Consequently, in contrast to Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, up until 2017, prevention work on domestic violence was not a mandatory part of the curriculum in England. Situated within a policy context where there has been little guidance or expectation from central government, schools have been left to themselves to decide whether to act on this issue and the motivation to undertake prevention work has come from individual schools or teachers (Ellis, 2014). However, intensive lobbying from domestic

¹ The PSHE Association is the national body for Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) education

violence organisations and recommendations from the House of Commons committee on Sexual Harassment and Sexual Violence in Schools (House of Commons, 2016) had the effect of shifting debates away from whether PSHE should become a statutory part of the curriculum to the question of whether Sex and Relationships Education (SRE) should be made compulsory. This ongoing debate culminated in the publication of draft statutory guidance in July 2018 confirming that statutory status for SRE in secondary schools and Relationships Education in primary schools would commence in September 2020, following a period of consultation and parliamentary approval of the proposed guidance (DfE, 2018). A brief overview of the history of relationship and sexuality education in England and Wales is summarised below.

History of sex and relationships education in England and Wales

During the mid-1980s, hard-hitting media campaigns aiming to raise awareness about the AIDS (Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome) epidemic, alongside moral panics within the tabloid press around the use of some sex education materials in schools, led to substantial shifts in public opinion and debates around the suitability of the content of sex education. Consequently, in 1988, the Local Government Act introduced a clause, which became known as Section 28, stating that local authorities should not promote homosexuality or promote teaching around the acceptability of homosexuality as a substitute for heterosexual relationships within the family unit. Although this did not apply directly to schools, this shift led to anxieties among schools about what they were permitted to teach, ultimately undermining the confidence of those delivering sex education. In 1992, the government launched its Health of the Nation strategy (Department of Health, 1992), which outlined the government's aim to reduce teenage pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases (STIs). At the same time, an enquiry conducted by the Sex Education Forum found that sex education policies were inconsistent across schools and that there was confusion around the requirement for sex education within the national curriculum. Furthermore, uncertainties around what was permitted to be taught in schools meant that young people were not receiving information they needed (Thomson and Scott, 1992). This led to a commitment by government that all secondary school pupils should be offered the opportunity to receive a well-planned programme of sex education during their school careers: the 1993 Education Act stated that the biological aspects of sex education could be included in the national curriculum, although parents were granted the right to withdraw their children from sex

education in schools. The 1996 Education Act stated that biological aspects of sex education should also be taught to primary school children, and this legislation was updated in 1999 when sex education became known as Sex and Relationships Education (SRE) to acknowledge that children and young people should be taught about the broader aspects of relationships; this led to SRE becoming firmly embedded in the PSHE curriculum. Government's first SRE guidance was published in 2000 and although it remained non-statutory, it was received optimistically by schools as the most comprehensive guidance produced on the subject. After a long period of campaigning, Section 28, which prohibited the promotion of homosexuality, was repealed in 2003. From 2006, intensive campaigning for PSHE, including SRE, to be made statutory began (Martinez, 2006) and in 2009, following a review of PSHE to ensure its content was fitting to meet the needs of young people, campaigners and educators were set for the introduction of compulsory PSHE. However, as outlined above, a change of government in 2010 meant that this legislative change was put on hold. Despite this, campaigning continued to push forward on the requirement for statutory PSHE until March 2017 when an amendment to the Children and Social Work Act confirmed statutory SRE in all secondary schools and relationships education in all primary schools, due to come into effect from 2020. Since this point, government has been developing updated guidance on RSE (DfE, 2018; DfE, 2019) and campaigning continues for mandatory PSHE (www.pshe-association.org.uk/campaigns).

The role of the school system

As a consequence of the development of such legislation, schools are now viewed as a key agent for addressing learning on sex and relationships as well as meeting children's pastoral needs. A shift from crisis responses to early intervention and prevention strategies also meant that schools were well placed to provide preventive education to whole populations of children and young people. The general expectation that schools should meet both children's learning on sex and relationships as well as their pastoral needs means that schools are required to consider the protection, safety and well-being of pupils as a priority by teaching children about safety concepts and to report any child protection concerns which may arise.

Government's recent guidance (DfE, 2018) confirmed that sex education would remain non-statutory in primary schools and instead focused on the statutory responsibility for primary schools to teach children about the characteristics of positive relationships including

friendships, family relationships and relationships with other adults and peers, including online relationships, with an emphasis on taking a 'whole-school approach' to relationships education. Although the guidance focuses on teaching children how to recognise healthy relationships, there is a lack of focus on teaching children how to recognise unhealthy relationships, and no reference to teaching primary school children about domestic violence. It is therefore assumed that young children will be able to recognise negative aspects of relationships, particularly those associated with domestic violence, by teaching them about the positive characteristics of relationships. Prominent discourses around protecting children's innocence (Meyer, 2007) may influence Government's decisions around the content of relationships education. A recent backlash by parents in the English Midlands against relationships education, including same sex relationships, drew on such discourses by making claims to 'Let kids be kids' and 'Say no to sexualisation of children'. The campaign culminated in a high court ruling that protestors had 'misinterpreted' the content of lessons on relationships education (The Guardian, 2019). This suggests the need for parents to be informed of the need for high quality SRE and that schools and parents should work together to make sure children and young people get the information and support they need.

Furthermore, although the 2018 Government guidance acknowledges the role that external third sector organisations can have in enhancing teaching by school staff, there is only a brief recommendation of the potential role of such organisations in supporting or supplementing teaching in this field by school staff who currently lack confidence, expertise and skills in this area (Ollis et al., 2013; Stanley et al., 2015). In response to Government's shift in policy, the PSHE Association prepared support materials in order to help schools to evaluate their current relationships education provision in preparation for these new statutory requirements (PSHE, 2018). Framing the delivery of prevention work through relationships education in schools as a statutory requirement is likely to ensure wider and more consistent implementation, as well as providing a strong message from government of the serious nature of interpersonal relationships, which may contribute to shifts in social norms. However, despite the change in statutory status for school-based prevention work, there remains a dearth of evidence about the effectiveness of programmes in respect of relationships education more broadly and how this work should be delivered to younger children in primary schools. The programme studied here fits into this recently developed education framework by addressing a range of forms of abuse within the scope of relationships education and in doing so offers support to schools to address children's well-being and safety needs.

Programme Origins and Ownership

Tender is a well-established London based third sector organisation and is described as '*an arts and education charity committed to preventing domestic abuse and sexual violence amongst young people, by promoting healthy relationships*' (www.tender.org.uk). Tender's 'Healthy Relationships' programme for primary schools is externally funded and, at the time of the evaluation, was offered to one primary school per London Borough, free of charge. The programme is delivered to one class of Year 6 pupils (aged 10-11) in each participating school over two consecutive days by two facilitators. The programme utilises interactive and drama-based methods of learning with the aim of helping children to develop skills for building healthy and respectful relationships (see Chapter Three for a more detailed description of the programme).

Tender was founded in 2003 by a woman who, at that time, worked as an actor, director and producer working on various theatre projects relating to violence against women. The organisation was established as a consequence of her involvement in these projects and an early collaboration was formed with its current director, who was then also involved in London's National Theatre. Its origins are therefore rooted within the realm of theatre, an influence which has been instrumental in its approach to prevention work in schools, and within its current primary schools' project, with its emphasis on the use of drama-based methods and activities. Tender's expertise is therefore historically located within educational drama and, in this respect, may be restricted in its approach in that other pedagogical methods may not have been considered.

The survival of drama-based programmes such as this one, is inextricably linked with how they are funded. Tender's programme, along with other drama-based programmes, is labour-intensive, delivered by two trained and skilled facilitators to a small group, typically a class of up to 30 children at a time. At the time this evaluation took place, the model operated over a two-day structure, rationalised as costing less - in time and money - than a longer programme delivered over an extended period. Facilitators described the advantages associated with a longer model as based on the opportunity for repetition of learning, although the condensed model meant that attrition rates were usually lower and learning was more intensive.

Although government support for the prevention of domestic violence through school-based work has been discernible over the last ten years (Home Office, 2009; Home Office, 2014), no additional resources have been allocated to schools to implement programmes. This means that traditionally school programmes have been developed by independent sector organisations where funding is limited (Stanley et al., 2015). Since relationships education will now be compulsory for all pupils in primary schools in England with effect from September 2020, additional tools and on-line resources have been developed to assist primary schools across England to include relationships education in the curriculum (DfE, 2018; [www.pshe-association.org.uk/ preparing-statutory-rse-and-relationships](http://www.pshe-association.org.uk/preparing-statutory-rse-and-relationships)). However, in the short term, schools will need additional funding to enable them to cover the costs of external programmes, such as Tender's, where much of the expertise and skills are currently situated.

A programme for primary schools: moving from domestic violence to 'healthy relationships'

Initially, Tender developed programmes for children in both primary and secondary schools, however, their original primary schools programme did not take off. Tender staff suggest this may have been due to the emergence of the Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) programme which was being widely adopted by primary schools across England from 2005 (www.sealcommunity.org), at the time their primary school programme was first put into operation. Consequently, since their emergence, Tender have mainly delivered their programme to secondary school children. However, having previously aimed to create a model addressing similar themes for primary school children, their primary school programme was redeveloped and has been delivered to primary school children in London since 2014.

The programme for primary schools is delivered to one class of Year 6 pupils (aged 10 to 11), over two consecutive days, by two facilitators: one male and one female. This mixed gender dynamic is considered to help facilitate discussions around gender and relationships without boys (or girls) feeling targeted or alienated; previous research has highlighted that boys can view programmes as 'sexist' if they do not address gender sensitively, (Hale et al., 2012). Furthermore, the mixed gender dynamic is understood to help support children's learning around gendered relationships via the relationship demonstrated by the male and female facilitators throughout the programme. Tender's aim is to help children to develop skills for

building healthy and respectful relationships, to promote positive attitudes and behaviours towards relationships and challenge those attitudes which condone abusive relationships. The topic of domestic violence and abuse is not explicitly addressed, and the programme broadly focusses on the areas of physical, sexual and emotional abuse. Tender offer two explanations for this rationale: first, that by re-framing the subject as 'healthy/unhealthy relationships', as opposed to 'domestic violence', young people are less likely to disengage and are more likely to view the subject as immediately relevant to their own circumstances, rather than perceiving it as abuse between adults within the context of a home. Second, although Tender stipulate that concepts such as domestic violence can be named and discussed if they are raised by children, by purposely avoiding explicit detail, teachers can be notionally reassured that topics are taught in an age-appropriate way (see later chapters for discussion of the implications of this approach). At the same time this approach serves to obscure gender dynamics, thereby depoliticising the issue (Ellis, 2006; Hester and Westmarland, 2005) and this point is discussed further in Chapter Seven.

Tender's Healthy Relationships programme is underpinned by a feminist theory of gender inequity that explains why domestic abuse and violence in relationships occur. The topic of gender equality is specifically addressed through an activity which occurs on the first day of the programme, in which children are asked to place written cards with gender stereotypical job roles (i.e. Doctor, Nurse) in order of their perceived power. The aim of this task is to engage children in a discussion around 'power', so that children are able to understand the relationship between power and wealth, as well as the differences between well paid jobs and lesser paid jobs, and how these are stereotypically related to gender roles. The task then evolves to thinking about 'power' in the context of relationships (i.e. husband and wife), and children are asked to place cards with each relationship type in their perceived order of power. Children are then asked to consider what might happen if one partner has more power than the other. The intention is that children are then able to identify the features of positive respectful relationships based on equal power (see section 'Tackling Gender' in Chapter Seven for further discussion). Other topics covered on day one of the programme include: healthy/unhealthy relationships, communication and conflict resolution, safe/unsafe touch and personal boundaries, early warning signs of unhealthy relationships, children's rights, and sources of support. On day two, topics include peer pressure, bullying and secrets. As such, this is an integrated healthy relationships programme tackling all forms of harm and abuse. Tender draw on interactive methods of learning including drama and role play, games, and small and whole group discussions to

address the programme topics and to engage children in their learning. These methods are endorsed as age-appropriate in that children can potentially engage in sensitive topics whilst keeping a safe distance, allowing participants to experience emotions by putting themselves in 'someone else's shoes'. The programme culminates at the end of day two with the Year 6 pupils presenting what they have learnt to their younger peers during an assembly.

Having delivered these topics in secondary schools since 2004, as noted above, Tender aimed to create a programme addressing similar themes for younger children in primary schools by drawing on their model of using drama-based games and exercises to explore the issues. Through this approach, there are opportunities for children to be empowered as active participants rather than passive recipients of messages delivered through more traditional methods of learning adopted by schools. Through children's active engagement in drama and role play, this programme aimed to empower children through their acquisition of knowledge and skills to be able to recognise early warning signs of abusive behaviour, to be equipped to manage potentially harmful situations, and to recognise and assert their rights, and encourage children to seek help if needed.

Methodological approach

The methodological approach to this study is underpinned by an ethical, theoretical and conceptual framework informed by feminist research and the sociology of childhood. Through this approach, children are understood as possessing agency, as social actors who both shape and are shaped by their circumstances (James et al., 1998). Children are conceptualised as active participants in the construction of knowledge through their everyday experiences, as well as a social group, particularly in relationship to adults. Feminist methodological values, which make visible the child-adult power relations, in which children's minority status render them relatively powerless, are drawn upon to recognise the imbalance of power in the research relationship. Combining the research philosophies of feminism and the sociology of childhood, has allowed ethical considerations such as potential tensions between children's vulnerability, their agency and rights to participation, to be identified and addressed. Drawing upon these paradigms, through a reflexive methodology, children are respected, empowered and validated as competent and active participants in the co-construction of knowledge (James et al., 1998).

The epistemological and ontological positions of feminist research and sociology of childhood are based upon social constructionist models of knowledge, which assert that rather than being based on external objective 'facts', social reality is based on subjective meanings which are continually being produced and revised by social actors. These positions are traditionally aligned with qualitative methods and are less frequently associated with objective quantitative methods (see Chapter Three for a more detailed account of feminist methodology). However, the combination of methods chosen for this mixed methods study reflects both the aims of the research and the theoretical framework; an emphasis on feminist theories of gender and violence and the argument that the problem of domestic violence is rooted in socially constructed systems of power and gender inequality, means that a qualitative approach to explore children's and adults' responses and understanding is applicable. Yet, developmental theories of learning, for example, the influence of emotional maturity and cognitive ability harnessed in preventive interventions such as that studied here, also suggest the value of measuring learning and knowledge through both qualitative and quantitative methods. Mixed methods were simultaneously utilised in this study to both enable children's participation and to minimise the power disparities by adopting methods and techniques suitable to the range of children's preferences and competencies. At the same time, this mixed methods approach enables multiple perspectives to be captured, legitimising the various accounts, and therefore enhancing the integrity of the findings.

Other programme evaluations have similarly adopted a combination of methods to examine whether prevention programmes work. Tutty et al. (2005) suggest that a number of different forms of evaluation are commonly utilised including needs assessments, process evaluations, outcome evaluations and measuring client satisfactions. These components each require an approach suitable to the aim, for example, a qualitative approach to process evaluation, to assess what happens during the implementation of a programme, would be appropriate, whereas a quantitative approach might be better suited to outcomes evaluation to assess whether the goals of a programme have been met. In this sense, a mixed methods approach is justified to suit the aims of the research. The extent to which these components are utilised can vary however, for example, a focus on outcomes evaluation can be driven by demands for evidence-based practice (Tutty et al., 2005). In the present study, findings will be relevant for a number of audiences including: domestic violence/ healthy relationships programme developers; programme funders; policy makers and academics. For this reason, using a mixed methods approach could be useful for

practitioners to evidence findings for funders and policy makers whilst contributing to knowledge and understanding about how a preventive programme works. A mixed methods approach in this sense is viewed as a positive aspect of the evaluation.

Research aims

This research aims to provide evidence of children's and adults' views and experiences as well as examining impact in respect of one interpersonal violence prevention programme targeted at primary school children in England. While the results are specific to this programme, it has many features in common with other such prevention programmes (Bell and Stanley, 2006; Hale et al., 2012) and understanding how any impact is achieved is relevant for the development and evaluation of other such programmes. Through the in-depth study of one programme, this research aims to contribute to the underdeveloped body of knowledge regarding interpersonal violence prevention programmes for younger children by providing answers to three principle research questions:

1. Can preventive school-based programmes improve younger children's knowledge and skills to enable them to recognise different forms of violence, including domestic violence, towards themselves and others?
2. How can impact be achieved for younger children and what forms of delivery influence outcomes?
3. How can the views of children and adults inform the development of relationships education in primary schools?

Summary of study methods

Three London primary schools were included in this evaluation to examine the delivery of Tender's Healthy Relationships programme for primary schools. The programme was delivered in the three schools in sequence between September and November 2016 (see Appendix 18 for information about the three schools). Access to these schools was organised by Tender staff who agreed with the schools in advance that the evaluation would take place alongside the programme. Data collection was undertaken in parallel with programme delivery and the majority of data was collected during this period. In each school, the programme was delivered to one class of up to thirty Year 6 children (aged 10 -

11). Two of the three schools in the evaluation comprised two classes per year group and in these schools, teachers selected one group of Year 6 children to take part in the programme. All children taking part in the programme were invited to participate in the evaluation and those children who agreed formed the sample group.

Qualitative data was collected using various methods: seven focus groups were conducted with 29 children to extract their views and experiences of the programme; semi structured interviews elicited the views of a range of adults including three class teachers, six Tender facilitators and four parents; and non-participant observation of programme delivery was adopted as a method to generate data on children's and adults' responses to the programme. Quantitative data was generated through a survey completed by children in the classroom that aimed to further understand the impact of the programme on the children's learning. Surveys were administered in schools at three time points: pre, post and 6 months after the programme.

Qualitative data were managed using NVivo data analysis software and analysed using a thematic analysis framework. SPSS software was used to manage quantitative data and analysis was conducted using Crosstabulations and Frequency tables to identify gender and school-based differences; differences between individual's survey scores were examined using Friedman's ANOVA and Wilcoxon tests.

Thesis outline

The thesis is organised around eight chapters:

Chapter Two reviews the theoretical and empirical literature in relation to interpersonal violence prevention for primary school children. The conceptual framework brings together prevention theories, gender theory and theories of childhood to consider how intervention through school-based work can offer a means of preventing domestic violence. This chapter ends with an overview of empirical studies of programmes for primary school children.

Chapter Three presents the methodological approach to this study. An account of the research process including details of designing and piloting the research tools, along with ethical considerations of doing research with younger children is provided. A reflective account of the process of data collection in schools is given, followed by the approach to data analysis. The chapter ends with an acknowledgement of the limitations of the study.

Chapters Four, Five and Six present the research findings. Chapter Four reports findings from the children's survey administered at three time points: pre and post programme, and at six months follow up. Children's learning as evidenced from the survey is organised under the broad categories of: gender equality; communication and managing conflict; peer pressure and bullying; staying safe from sexual abuse; help seeking; supporting peers. This is followed by a discussion of findings in relation to children's satisfaction with the programme.

Chapter Five explores children's own reflections of and responses to the programme, detailing findings from the children's focus group discussions as well as observations from the delivery of the programme. The first half of the chapter presents children's reflections and responses to the programme and are grouped around three broad headings: programme content; methods of delivery; and programme structure. The second half of the chapter offers an account of children's considerations of the impact of the programme and these are grouped around two additional headings: improved knowledge and awareness; and improved skills, confidence and relationships.

Chapter Six explores adult views of the programme including those of class teachers, programme facilitators and parents. Findings from individual adult interviews are organised and presented around the broad headings of: programme structure and process and programme outcomes and impact. Observations are utilised where appropriate to support findings from these interviews.

Chapter Seven draws together the key findings and presents a synthesis of findings in relation to the existing literature and key theories informing this study. The discussion is structured using the three principal research questions and is organised under three key headings: outcomes and impact; mechanisms and processes; and conditions for effective implementation.

The final chapter, Chapter Eight, draws the thesis to a conclusion with a consideration of how the research provides answers to the research questions alongside possible implications for policy and practice. The discussion closes with an overview of further questions raised by the research alongside the original contribution this research makes to current academic knowledge.

Note on terminology

Whilst acknowledging the dilemma regarding definition and terminology, as outlined at the start of this chapter, 'domestic violence' is the term most frequently used throughout the thesis. Although the term 'domestic abuse' conveys a wider meaning than domestic violence, in that violence can be one form of abuse, 'domestic violence' is recognised as a more widely established term. Even though the term is not explicitly used in the programme evaluated, the terms 'emotional violence' and 'physical violence' are used to explore this form of violence in interpersonal relationships. 'Sexual abuse' is referred to in the programme and is therefore used throughout the thesis. The term 'violence against women and girls' (VAWG), of which domestic violence is one form, is also used in Chapter Two, and in the section '*Legal and policy context for school-based work in England*' in this Introduction Chapter, to reflect the terminology used within that policy context.

Summary of Introduction Chapter

- Domestic violence is a serious and widespread global problem, the effects of which are profoundly damaging to the physical, sexual, emotional, psychological and social well-being of individuals and families. Feminist activism and research has been pivotal in exposing domestic violence as a gendered issue, and in bringing a once private issue into the public domain.
- Within shifting discourses of childhood, more recent inquiry has sought to explore the impact of exposure to domestic violence on children, the consequences of which are profound and enduring. Primary prevention as a strategy to end domestic violence emerged in response to the extensive scale and social and economic consequences of domestic violence.
- Despite a shift in UK government policy towards introducing statutory relationships education, there remains very little evidence about the effectiveness of prevention programmes for younger children. This research makes an original contribution by providing essential evidence of the effectiveness and acceptability of a programme for primary school children which covers a range of topics, including domestic violence, within the scope of relationships education.
- This mixed methods study draws on feminist methodological values and the sociology of childhood to understand children's and adults' experiences of the programme through qualitative research. Using a reflexive methodology, children are respected and validated as competent participants in the construction of knowledge. A quantitative approach reflects the aim of the research to measure learning and knowledge whilst simultaneously enabling children's participation through methods suited to their competencies and preferences.
- Three London primary schools are included in this evaluation to examine the delivery of a Healthy Relationships programme for primary schools, delivered to one class of children aged 10 to 11 per school in sequence between September and November 2016.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

This study considers whether and how educational programmes developed and delivered to younger children in primary schools can offer a means of preventing domestic violence. The conceptual framework utilised brings together prevention theories, gender theory and theories of childhood particularly in the fields of education and domestic violence. This chapter begins with a discussion of the concept of prevention within social policy and provides an overview of the two dominant models used in prevention strategies: public health and prevention science. The discussion then moves on to address domestic violence as the problem which needs to be prevented. How domestic violence is conceptualised within feminist theories of gender inequality is then explored, followed by consideration of children as the target audience for prevention programmes and how children are situated within theories of childhood. The review then brings feminist and childhood theory together for the consideration of the prevention of domestic violence through school-based work. This is followed by an outline of the mechanisms through which change can occur through education. The chapter ends with an overview of empirical studies of school-based prevention work.

Searching the literature

The literature identified for this study built on Stanley et al.'s (2015) systematic review of the international literature which identified evidence relating to preventive interventions on domestic violence for children and young people in the general population. However, the bulk of the literature was identified by database searches including Social Work Abstracts and Sociological Abstracts. The searches included English language publications of key peer reviewed journals including Gender and Education, Sex Education and Health Education, time limited to publications between 2000-2018. These dates were selected to ensure that a wide range of relevant literature was included. The search terms included: 'child*'; 'primary', 'elementary', 'junior', 'young' AND 'domestic abuse', 'domestic violence', 'sex*', 'relationship*', 'health*' AND 'education', 'lesson*', 'school*'. In response to the recognition that the programme studied addressed other forms of child abuse and harm including

bullying, peer violence, cyber bullying and child sexual abuse, searches were subsequently broadened to include studies of broader prevention programmes for children under the age of 11. References cited in relevant journal articles and book chapters were searched for further literature and I was alerted to other sources of literature by members of the supervisory team. Grey literature, including that identified on internet websites including the PSHE Association, Sex Education Forum and Gov.uk was also identified and incorporated into this review.

Prevention in social policy

Defining prevention

Prevention is widely adopted as a key strategy for social change, both in the UK and internationally, particularly in relation to policies concerning children and young people (see for example, DCSF, 2010; HM Government, 2016; Long, 2017). Ellis (2014:22) asserts that through the advancement of research and policy 'prevention has an almost uncontested dominance in social policy': prevention has been so widely taken up by current and past governments in England that it could be argued that current policy is driven by 'preventionism' (see also Parton, 2006). Prevention is not a new concept, as Billis (1981:367) pointed out over three decades ago, prevention is an 'attractive, almost irresistible ambition' implicitly associated with social change. Yet, historically, prevention has been defined as a 'shaky proposition' (Hawkins, 1999:444) with the risk that prevention will not work or indeed that it could do more harm than good (Finkelhor, 2018). While prevention is harnessed through policy and legislation as a solution to address social problems, there is generally a lack of explanation as to what prevention is, or how it might influence social change. Freeman (1999) stated that prevention is contextual and suggested that practice could be regarded as prevention in one context and time but not in another.

Nevertheless, concerns over the impact of domestic violence, alongside its high economic and social costs, means there is a compelling argument for a preventive rather than reactive approach to the problem (see Heise, 2011). Although prevention appears to be a straightforward approach to the problem of domestic violence, Ellis (2014) points out that implicit in this idea are four contestable assumptions: that violence is not an inevitable aspect of relationships; that violence is learned; that the cause can be identified; and that by

intervening it can be reduced. There is a further assumption that different forms of interpersonal violence are discernible and that individuals and populations share the same set of values and are willing to stop it. However, Freeman (1999) makes a distinction in understanding the process of preventive policy making, whereby prevention invites support only at the *general* or abstract level. It is the *specific* aspects of proposals, he says, which provoke disagreement and therefore, necessarily implicit in any preventive intervention is a shared set of values. The general case for domestic violence prevention, however, is hard to dispute and two main approaches have been widely adopted in public health prevention: the public health model and prevention science model. An outline of both of these models is given below.

Public health model

The public health model focuses on the timing of interventions through a tripartite model with levels of prevention identified as primary, secondary and tertiary, whereby primary relates to the stage prior to the onset of a problem, secondary when a problem has become evident and tertiary when the problem has become complicated (see Ellis and Thiara, 2014). For example, 'primary prevention' in the field of domestic violence is often targeted at the community level, to whole populations, and education is frequently employed as a strategy to prevent violence before it starts through both public information campaigns and school-based education. Secondary prevention is targeted at populations deemed 'at risk', or experiencing early onset of the problem, for example this could include programmes designed to screen women in health care settings so they can be referred on to support services before the problem gets worse. Tertiary prevention is targeted at those who have experienced or continue to experience the problem and efforts are made to mitigate negative impacts (see Heise, 2011).

An alternative tripartite model, modifying the focus of prevention from 'when' to 'who', is found in Gordon's (1983) work. 'Universal' prevention targets whole populations when an intervention is considered appropriate for a population regardless of whether they are experiencing the problem; 'selective' prevention targets individuals or sub-groups where the risk of developing a problem is considered to be above average and 'indicated' prevention targets 'high risk' populations. Hardiker (1999) later reformed the tripartite model introducing five levels of prevention including base, first, second, third and fourth levels,

providing greater distinction between the levels and offering more clarity about the activities and target groups at each level.

Although the public health model has been broadly adopted across a range of disciplines, it has been criticised regarding its appropriateness as a framework for tackling social problems. Little and Mount (1999) critique the lack of distinction between levels and the broad classifications that simplify complex issues. For example, where a programme is targeted at universal populations, such as domestic violence prevention programmes in schools, it is likely that some of the target population will have already experienced the problem and therefore what is categorised as primary prevention, will be secondary prevention for some. Secondly, they argue that the model emphasises the timing of a prevention activity, rather than who will be targeted or what the activity will achieve. A more fundamental critique is that the primary, secondary and tertiary forms of prevention are adopted from a medical model and, as such, the model assumes that ideas about cause and effect can be translated from the natural to the social world (Freeman, 1999).

Furthermore, adopting a public health approach to the primary prevention of domestic violence through school-based education assumes that children are able to relate effectively to future 'risks' and their lives as adults by teaching them how to protect themselves from violence in their present lives. Sociology of childhood theories which situate children as 'beings' rather than 'becomings' (Qvortrup et al., 1994), as active, independent people with rights, interests and agency, challenges this prospective public health approach to primary prevention, and this is discussed further in the section below on '*Theorising children and childhood*'.

Prevention science model

Prevention science emerged in response to the critique of the public health model, particularly in response to its lack of focus on outcomes and measures of effectiveness. Prevention science is primarily used in the prevention of crime and draws on a theory of delinquent development (Farrington and West, 1993) and the social development model of behaviour (Hawkins, 1999). Farrington's theory of delinquent development states that life experiences influence behaviour choices and as such, delinquent and criminal behaviour reside within the individual rather than in the environment (see Buffone, 2012). The social development model hypothesises that when strong bonds of attachment and commitment

are produced among social groups with clear standards for behaviour, groups increase their behaviour consistent with those standards. Founded in developmental and social psychology, particularly social learning theory (Bandura, 1986), prevention science perceives that future problematic behaviours can be predicted through a set of risk factors which, once identified, can be targeted through a range of interventions.

Childhood experiences have been identified as key predictors of events later in life. Specific risk factors for subsequent life outcomes have traditionally been identified through both longitudinal, small scale experimental studies including The Cambridge Study in Delinquent Development (Farrington and West, 1993), and larger general population studies such as the Avon Longitudinal Study of Parents and Children (ALSPAC), also known as the 'Children of the 90s' study'. The Cambridge Study in Delinquent Development is a frequently cited longitudinal study of the development of delinquent and anti-social behaviours among 411 South London boys, born in 1953, and studied from the age of 8 to 48: the aim of the study was to measure factors alleged to be the cause of offending. Although the list of risk factors was extensive (see Farrington and West, 1993; Hawkins, 1999), the three broad categories of risk and protective factors consisted of individual, family and environmental characteristics. Thus, in prevention science, risk factors are drawn from population-based statistics and risk level is then assessed. For example, in England, the Common Assessment Framework (CAF), introduced across the country as part of the 2004 Children Act, is a key tool in child protection for the early identification of children and their families who are vulnerable to poor outcomes. This approach to the assessment of risk is also predominant in the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) movement. The ACE study, conducted in 1995 by the American health organisation Kaiser Permanente and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (see Felli et al., 1998; Gilbert et al., 2015) demonstrated an association between the number and prevalence of adverse childhood experiences, including (among other factors) exposure to domestic violence, and health and social problems across the lifespan. Subsequently, in the United States in particular, ACEs have been widely used in adult and paediatric health settings to screen patients, with the aim of using information to target protection and prevention strategies (Purewal et al., 2016). ACEs are of particular interest within the field of public health because of the association between early adversity and mental health effects, impacting on morbidity and mortality in adulthood (Merrick et al, 2017).

The appeal of the scientific approach of prevention science may relate to the demand for evidence-based policy and practice by seemingly providing practical solutions to complex

social problems. However, along with the public health model, this approach has been criticised for its approach to tackling multifaceted social problems. For example, in his critique of ACEs, Finkelhor (2018) questions the ethics of screening for conditions when the quality of available treatments, particularly for high ACE individuals, cannot be assured, particularly as research has not yet established the effectiveness of ‘non-specific’ interventions which address multiple difficulties. Furthermore, in screening adults for domestic violence, Feder et al. (2009) caution that the evidence base has not yet established the effectiveness of interventions for women who are screened and then referred, as opposed to those actively seeking help. In addition, while prevention and early intervention have been widely upheld as key responses to the protection of children and domestic violence (see e.g. Guy et al., 2014; WHO, 2010;), understandings of how such approaches might work with younger children, particularly in the context of primary prevention through school-based work, are similarly underdeveloped.

In a child protection context, Featherstone et al. (2013) offer a compelling critique of early intervention, arguing that ‘now or never’ (Munro, 2011: 69) arguments around the need for the state to intervene with urgency, are underpinned by the ‘use and abuse’ of the scientific approach to identifying risk and poor outcomes. They argue instead for the need to develop ‘a family support project for the 21st Century’ (Featherstone et al., 2013: 4) which recognises families’ strengths as well as their vulnerabilities in the context of decades of neo-liberalism and economic crisis. The publication of *Working Together to Safeguard Children* (2010), first indicated a move towards a more child-centred approach, taking into account the recommendations of Lord Laming’s (2009) report which highlighted the need for professionals to get to know children as individuals, presumably as opposed to simply categorising children into specific ‘risk’ groups. This requirement for a more balanced approach has remained significant in government policy regarding its approach to identifying children’s needs and providing early help for families (HM Government, 2013). This is significant because adopting a child-centred approach to primary prevention through school-based work which moves away from thinking of children as a homogeneous ‘at risk’ group would involve delivering programmes that reflect the needs and interests of local children and families.

Preventing domestic violence

Addressing the problem: feminist discourses of gender inequality

Feminist discourses, of which there are different and competing strands, locate domestic violence and abuse within the paradigm of unequal power relations, where violence against women and girls (VAWG) is an outcome of, and is reinscribed by, gender inequality (Radford et al., 1996). A gendered theory of violence demonstrates the differences in the 'hierarchical positions of men and women in relations which repeatedly accord men the greatest access to the exercise of power' (Bell, 1993:42). Since the problem of domestic violence is rooted in socially constructed gender relations, the solution to preventing it also lies within those socially constructed systems of power and gender inequality (see Lombard, 2015). Gender is understood not as a binary description of men and women, but as the socially produced categories of masculinity and femininity which are learned and change over time and between cultures (Connell, 1987). Violence is therefore perceived as a problem associated with certain masculinities, rather than with men (Mills, 2001). As such, finding alternative ways of 'doing' masculinity (Connell, 1995) affords opportunities to disrupt violent masculinities. Kelly's (1988) theory of a 'continuum of violence' provides a framework whereby the 'naming' or 'labelling' of violence enables such normative behaviour to become visible and therefore challengeable, thereby making otherwise acceptable behaviour, unacceptable. It is perceived that the acquirement of such knowledge is critical to understanding the 'everyday' nature of violence (Dobash and Dobash, 2003). However, Hearn (1993) maintains that men (and boys) should also be involved in this process of enlightenment, by recognising their own actions as violent and abusive. Consequently, feminist research has maintained that changing attitudes and behaviour is key to challenging and preventing men's violence, with children and young people being the target for change (Hester and Westmarland, 2005).

Gender as obscured in prevention programmes

Although widely adopted, it is argued that the dominant public health and prevention science approach towards domestic violence prevention dilutes an understanding of domestic violence as a gendered issue (see Stanley et al., 2015). In public health, the

ecological model is widely adopted to explain the occurrence of domestic violence (see Krug and Dahlberg, 2002; Our Watch, 2015). This model identifies the occurrence of risk factors at four levels of influence: individual (personal); relationship (interpersonal); community and societal while allowing for the inclusion of risk and protective factors from multiple domains of influence (i.e. psychological models on individual risk factors). Gender can therefore be encompassed within this framework, since it considers structural inequalities, societal norms, inequalities within communities and relationships, as well as risk factors at the individual level (i.e. witnessing domestic violence) (WHO, 2010). However, gender is frequently obscured in school-based prevention programmes and there is often a resistance to adopting feminist discourses (Tutty et al., 2005). For example, Stanley et al. (2015) found that only three out of 98 reported programmes delivered across the UK, stated a specific focus on promoting gender inequality. Even where gender and gendered power relations are addressed, feminist understandings of domestic violence are not always explained as an outcome of gender inequality with programmes instead situated under the broader public health framework of 'healthy relationships'. On the other hand, research has highlighted that if programmes do not address gender sensitively, audiences can view programmes as 'sexist' (Hale et al., 2012). Prevention science is similarly problematic, located within crime prevention and social learning theory as opposed to gender theory and feminist discourses.

However, programme developers may be more likely to obtain funding from those ascribing to the dominant public health model despite its lack of focus on gender, and this may be the necessary compromise to ensure that programmes continue to be disseminated (Ellis, 2014). Although working within a multi-agency context may help to support school-based work (Friend, 2014), these different approaches to prevention could provoke tensions between programme developers and those funding programmes, as a consequence of their different working practices and opposing agendas (see Ellis, 2004). This can lead to programmes having multiple aims and diverse content, with those delivering programmes faced with the task of ensuring that all the topics prescribed by funders are covered within limited time constraints (DMSS, 2012; Reid Howie Associates, 2002). Whilst the public health and prevention science approaches to domestic violence prevention may be less controversial - particularly within the school setting - it is argued that the promotion of feminist discourses, which clearly address gender inequality and gendered power relations, is essential in the prevention of domestic violence (Flood et al., 2009; Lombard and Harris, 2017; Reed et al., 2010).

A gendered approach, which recognises the cause of domestic violence as an outcome of male privilege and women's inequality, challenges the structures of power and inequality which underpin such violence. When this approach informs domestic violence prevention programmes, children learn to understand why the problem of domestic violence exists. An understanding of gender roles and how they shape behaviour and relationships can enable children to recognise and become better equipped to challenge everyday interactions which reinforce gender inequality. For example, gendered norms and expectations within schools which influence attitudes around what it means to be a boy or a girl (Renold, 2005), including opportunities to utilise school spaces and resources (Maxwell, et al., 2010), expectations around gendered subject choices and future career choices (Lombard and Harris, 2017), are broken down. Through this approach, teachers' awareness and learning around gender inequality can be raised and understandings of heteronormativity challenged. For example, by responding to incidents within classrooms or topics raised, teachers can actively encourage children to consider contextualised understandings of gender (Keddie, 2008). Understanding and challenging structural, institutional and individual inequalities that enable gender-based violence to persist are an important feature of all violence prevention work that takes a gendered approach. A move away from a public health approach to prevention, with its emphasis on future risks and a lack of focus on gender, towards prevention approaches that are rooted in an understanding of gender inequality and respect for others' rights and autonomy is likely to be more meaningful and relevant for younger children in their present lives.

The broadening scope of programmes

Alongside children's experience of domestic violence, many different forms of violence can affect children and young people at different stages in their lives, including bullying, peer-to-peer violence, sexual harassment, child sexual exploitation, dating violence and domestic violence within families (Monks and Coyne, 2011; Tutty et al., 2005). These forms of violence are often addressed within prevention programmes targeted at children and young people in schools (see Stanley et al., 2015), with the intention that learning about violence at an early age can empower them in their present lives and minimise its prevalence in the future. However, broadening the scope of programmes to address these other forms of violence, especially bullying where research and policy are not informed by theories of gender, means

that the gendered approach that does inform many domestic violence programmes becomes difficult to sustain, as outlined below. At the same time, there is a growing perception that schools are not always safe places for children (House of Commons, 2016) and although different types of violence can be experienced by children both within and outside school, bullying is the form of violence most commonly identified and extensively studied in schools (Smith, 2011; Tutty, 2005). A review of the research addressing these other forms of abuse including bullying, cyberbullying and child sexual abuse is presented below.

Bullying, peer violence and cyberbullying prevention

Bullying has been defined as aggressive behaviour or intentional harm doing, which is repeated over time within an interpersonal relationship characterised by an actual or perceived imbalance of power or strength (Olweus and Limber, 2010). Bullying can therefore be considered as a form of abuse, although what sets bullying apart from domestic violence is the context in which it occurs and the nature of the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator (Olweus, 1997). As bullying is considered to be a comparable form of violence, interventions that target bullying could be useful in current understandings of domestic violence prevention.

For example, between 1991 and 1993, a large UK based anti-bullying programme was implemented in 16 primary and 7 secondary schools in Sheffield and included 6500 students aged 8 to 16 years (Smith et al., 2003). The core component of the programme was a whole-school policy against bullying and schools could choose to implement a range of additional optional interventions including curriculum work, playground interventions and individual work with bullies, victims or peer groups. Assertiveness training for victims of bullying was also supported by the project, as were improvements to children's playtime experience, notably lunchtime supervisor training and environmental improvements. Outside the school, parents were encouraged to become involved by becoming lunchtime supervisors or assisting with assertiveness training, and schools were encouraged to establish anti-bullying networks with organisations outside the school community (Eslea and Smith, 1998). This study concluded that where schools are prepared to make a sustained effort, bullying could be reduced in the long term and schools with a clear and 'active' anti-bullying policy had continued to reduce the incidence of bullying (Smith et al., 2003). Although these findings

may be useful in considering domestic violence prevention, this study was conducted 25 years ago and may therefore lack relevance to younger children now.

Findings from systematic reviews of more recent evaluations focussing on bullying, cyberbullying and school-based peer violence prevention programmes indicate that although such programmes are generally effective, studies have only moderate to small effect sizes. For example, a meta-analysis of RCTs assessing efficacy of 14 anti-bullying programmes with over 30,000 adolescents aged between 7 and 16 years found moderate effect sizes for outcomes measuring bullying and victimisation frequency, although greater impact was found in interventions of less than one year and for children under 10 years of age (Jiménez-Barbero et al., 2016). This suggests that when it comes to preventing violence, including domestic violence, early intervention is key. Cantone et al's (2015) systematic review of interventions on bullying and cyberbullying in schools found that of 17 included studies, only one related to cyberbullying, and that although the majority of studies did not show positive effects in the long term, interventions that focussed on the whole school rather than through classroom-based curricula and social skills training alone, were more effective in reducing bullying. This is consistent with findings from Flygare et al's (2013) review of eight anti bullying programmes in Sweden, including 3487 children aged 8 to 17 years, which found that 'effective' interventions had less impact on bullies than they had on victims. Similarly, Hunt (2007) found that short-term educational approaches appear to have little impact on bullying behaviour, and that schools may need to develop alternative approaches.

Programmes that aim to increase awareness of the negative impact of bullying are potentially shifting attitudes so that students are less likely to accept bullying behaviour and less likely to engage in it. This relationship between attitudes towards bullying and actual bullying behaviour is consistent with theories of children's normative beliefs towards aggression in predicting aggressive behaviour (Bellmore et al., 2005). As research indicates that school-based prevention programmes do not have a reliable and consistent effect on rates of bullying, it is likely that other factors may also influence bullying behaviours at the individual, social and community levels (Hunt, 2007). For example, bullying prevention programmes do not appear to take account of the impact of gender on bullying behaviours or victimisation and this is a significant limitation when considering the transferability of theory and practice in bullying prevention to domestic violence prevention.

Tutty et al. (2005) in their review of 37 bullying programmes, state that most prevention programmes report some measure of success in increasing knowledge and/or decreasing violence. In summary, the following characteristics are identified as key to the successful prevention of violence:

- A multi-dimensional approach which involves a combination of individual, classroom, school-wide and community-based initiatives with students, teachers, school staff and parents.
- Continuity throughout the school career, with prevention starting before adolescence and a programme with a longer duration.
- Including cognitive, affective and behavioural components in a programme.
- Skill building and active participation in non-violent conflict resolution by students and school staff.
- Clear school policies and procedures to deal with violent incidences.

Teacher enthusiasm and support for such programmes has also been identified as important for programme success (Swift et al., 2017), and programme fidelity as well as lesson preparation time (but not duration of lessons) were linked with reductions in victimisation at the classroom level in an evaluation of the KiVa anti-bullying programme in Finland (Haataja et al, 2014).

These key characteristics may be transferrable to other school-based programmes and could prove useful in the development of similar programmes for domestic violence prevention. However, although Smith and Sharp (2002) acknowledge that anti-bullying work should not be distorted by a male stereotype of bullying behaviour and should properly reflect girls' experiences, as noted above, gender is not generally a feature of bullying prevention programmes. Much of the research on bullying prevention reviewed here rests on the public health model with its emphasis on risk factors and outcomes with a distinct lack of a gendered or child-centred approach that asks how interventions approach children as actors with agency. Caution should also be applied to the transferability of evidence generated outside the UK context. Nevertheless, Tutty et al. (2005) make the case for presenting all violence prevention programmes under a common framework to strengthen and generalise learning from one programme to another. School based programmes aimed at preventing child sexual abuse are similarly widely developed and delivered in schools and the literature on this form of primary prevention is considered below.

Child sexual abuse prevention

The problem of child sexual abuse (CSA) is significant with an estimated prevalence rate of 18-20% for women and 8% for men worldwide (Barth et al., 2013). As two-thirds of individuals never disclose their victimisation, these figures are likely to underestimate its true prevalence (London, 2005). Walsh et al. (2015) report that sexual abuse occurs across all socioeconomic and ethnic groups, and that perpetrators can be adults or other young people outside the family as well as within it. Not all children are at equal risk of CSA and risk factors include being female, having a physical or mental disability, parental mental illness, alcohol or drug dependency and young maternal age (Walsh et al., 2015). Girls appear more likely to be victimised by family members and boys by non-family members, while children aged between 7 and 12 years of age are most vulnerable (Finkelhor et al., 1990). In response to the prevalence, characteristics and risk factors of CSA, school-based education programmes, as a primary prevention response to child sexual abuse, have been widely developed and taught in schools since the 1970s (Radford et al, 2017). Programmes aim to teach children skills to be safe and to increase children's awareness of sexual abuse, thereby reducing their vulnerabilities particularly where the perpetrator is a trusted adult. Programme topics typically cover themes such as body ownership; distinguishing types of touches; identifying potentially abusive situations and avoiding, resisting or escaping such situations; secrecy; and how and who to turn to for help. Programme formats vary from didactic approaches such as address or talk, emphasising children's passive listening and acquisition of knowledge, to more participatory and skills focussed learning such as role play, rehearsing or practicing newly acquired skills. Programmes use a wide range of resources including films, drama, role-play, puppet shows, multi-media, books, comics, discussions and practice-based activities to enhance learning of skills (Walsh, 2015).

Such programmes aim to transfer the knowledge and skills learned by children in the classroom to real-life situations. Although a number of CSA prevention programmes have been tested experimentally, the long-term benefits of programmes in reducing the prevalence of sexual abuse in programme participants is not known (Finkelhor and Jones, 2006) as studies have not yet adequately measured impact on victimisation. Most common measures include changes in knowledge about sexual abuse, changes in knowledge about protective behaviour which may, or may not, impact on actual behaviour and how to get help (Radford et al., 2017). A systematic review and meta-analysis by Walsh et al. (2015) included 24 studies across seven countries with a total of 5802 participants, of whom 98%

were from primary schools and found evidence of improvements in protective behaviour and knowledge of sexual abuse concepts among children exposed to school-based programmes regardless of type of programme offered. There was no evidence that participation in programmes increased or decreased children's anxiety or fears about child sexual abuse (Walsh et al., 2015). Similarly, a review by Fryda and Hulme (2015) reported that in studies where this was considered, most showed that the majority of children had no negative impact following participation in a prevention programme, and two studies reported a decrease in children's fear and anxiety after participation in prevention programmes. Although some studies collected parent satisfaction data (Grendel, 1991; Hazzard, 1991; Hebert, 2001; Tutty, 1997; Wurtele, 1987), parental anxiety was not measured in any study, and it is suggested this could be an important measure for determining the role of parents in moderating programme effects. The studies included in the review by Walsh and colleagues (2015) suggest that prevention programmes improve children's awareness (Tutty, 1997; Zwi et al., 2007), that changes in knowledge do not deteriorate over time (Daigneault et al., 2012; Krahe and Knappert, 2009) signalling that booster sessions for reinforcing programme messages remain appropriate strategies, and that programmes increase the likelihood of disclosing abuse for participating children than for those who had not been exposed. However, it should be noted that the evidence of impact from the 24 studies included in this review was described as 'moderate', and it is not known whether increases in knowledge offer protection to children under threat of sexual abuse (Pulido et al., 2015) and particularly a child's ability to recognise and react to abuse from a manipulative and trusted adult.

There is also some caution that the gains made by children can be small or negligible, particularly if messages are not reinforced by caregivers or family members (Tutty, 1997) and Walsh et al (2015) suggest a number of factors which may influence programme effectiveness including individual child factors, family microsystems and school contexts. When considering different outcomes for certain groups of children, programmes have been shown to be effective in improving knowledge among diverse minority groups and with children living in low income communities. Fryda and Hulme (2014) found that younger children tend to score lower than older children in gains in knowledge about CSA and this is supported by the systematic review and meta-analysis by Walsh et al., 2015 who found that older children made better gains in knowledge than younger children when outcomes are measured using a questionnaire survey, but not when vignette based measures were used to assess outcomes. This suggests that measures used for testing gains in knowledge may be

inappropriate or that children already possess knowledge about concepts delivered in programmes at baseline. For example, Barron and Topping's (2013) evaluation of the Tweenees sexual abuse prevention programme found that older children possessed more knowledge at the start and that younger children gained more, whilst MacIntyre and Carr's (1999) evaluation of the Stay Safe primary prevention programme for child sexual abuse in Ireland found that children aged seven benefited the most.

Integrated prevention programmes

As a consequence of experiencing domestic violence in their homes, children are at increased risk of experiencing emotional, physical and sexual abuse and neglect and of developing emotional and behavioural problems (Holt et al, 2008; Radford et al., 2011), and children are potentially at risk of engaging in higher levels of aggression as well as rationalising abusive behaviour where this may occur in their future lives (Loeber et al., 2005). Exposure to parental violence and maltreatment in childhood have also been associated with bullying behaviour (Baldry, 2003). This points to the need for programme content to address a range of topics and themes in integrated ways, so that single programmes can prevent multiple problem behaviours (DeGue et al., 2013); research informing this approach to prevention was identified as a priority in the 2015 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Inquiry Center Research Priorities. Foshee et al., (2016) examined whether multiple forms of violence including dating violence, bullying and sexual harassment share risk factors which could be targeted in single programmes designed to prevent all three forms of aggression. They concluded that programmes aimed at reducing shared risk factors (i.e. anger reactivity and low maternal monitoring) have the potential to prevent all three forms of violence among adolescents exposed to domestic violence. DeGue and colleagues (2013) identified shared risk factors between youth violence and sexual violence highlighting the potential for multidomain violence prevention strategies. As such, integrated strategies could offer an effective approach to prevention when multiple behaviours covary and share risk factors that can be targeted for change within a single programme.

Target audiences for prevention programmes

Theorising children and childhood

Childhood is situated as a key site for prevention. As discussed above, in the field of domestic violence, primary prevention is concerned with stopping violence before it starts by targeting whole populations through education, with children located as a legitimate target. How childhood is understood therefore has implications for prevention work with children. Qvortrup (1985) argues that it was through the scholarisation of children – as a consequence of industrialisation – that understandings around the value of children shifted. Before then, children had been valued for their economic contribution to the family and the labour market, but since then they have been thought of as dependents, needing to be socialised in preparation for adult life (Mayall, 2002). Within traditional social sciences, socialisation and child development theories allege that children require the guidance of adults to adopt the values and behaviours accepted by society. Socialisation was viewed as the mechanism through which children gradually acquired their knowledge of social roles and children were positioned as passive recipients of this knowledge (James et al., 1998). Through the process of socialisation, children were positioned as ‘becoming’ adult, rather than ‘being(s)’ in their own right (Qvortrup et al., 1994), since it was the potential of children as future adults that was of interest within society. Childhood was widely perceived as a rehearsal for adult life, thus locating children as a marginalised group, where competence and autonomy could only be achieved through educational and parenting processes. It is through the belief that adults acted in the best interests of the child that their right to exert power over them was (and still is) legitimised. The adult/child binary was founded on an age-based hierarchy, with the defining and oppositional² characteristics between adults and children understood as a biological and therefore ‘natural’ consequence of age. However, it was through Aries’ (1962) influential work, and his assertion that historically and culturally childhood had not always been the same, that the concept of childhood as a social construction, as opposed to a natural phenomenon, began to develop. The emergence of ‘the new sociology of childhood’ demonstrated a shift in contemporary social theory of childhood. Within this ‘new paradigm’ (James and Prout, 2003) there existed ‘a call for children to be understood as social actors shaping as well as shaped by their circumstances’

² Within the adult/child binary Adult is positioned as: mature, rational, competent, social, autonomous; Child as immature, irrational, incompetent, asocial, dependent

(James et al., 1998: 6). This paradigm represented a shift away from the predominant concept of socialisation, with children possessing agency, and conceptualised as persons in their own right rather than as 'becomings'. Childhood came to be understood as both a period in which children lived their lives, but more significantly as a social category, thereby allowing a move away from developmental, individualistic accounts of childhood to childhood as a structural form. The improved status of children was further influenced through the legal discourse of Children's Rights, with children presented with the opportunity (as well as the requirement), for their voices to be heard. In social research for example, there has been an increased recognition that children's views can and should be elicited on a wide range of issues that affect them (Øverlien and Holt, 2018). In the UK, children's participation was enshrined by law in 1991 through the ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Whilst it is acknowledged that the constitution of Children's Rights is neither unproblematic (Thomas, 2017), nor uncontroversial³, this legal framework established children's autonomy as a far-reaching dynamic (James et al., 1998).

As well as a trend towards increased autonomy, children are at the same time increasingly regulated, with the family and the school identified as the two key institutions through which childhood is governed, as well as the sites where adult power determines the nature of children's experiences (Mayall, 2002). As noted by Rose (1989: 121), 'Childhood is the most intensively governed sector of personal existence...the modern child has become the focus of innumerable projects that purport to safeguard it from physical, sexual and moral danger, to ensure its 'normal' development'. The extent to which children have been subjected to political strategies designed to govern them, occurs at the same time as increased autonomy. As James et al. (1998:8) maintain, by governing individuals 'through the capture of the inside...it illuminates the subtleties of new forms of power-knowledge (Foucault, 1977) in which children are enjoined to speak, make themselves visible and to regulate their own behaviour, as well as to be controlled by others'. This accounts for the various competing political discourses concerning childhood, with children positioned within three dominant discourses: investment, threat and victim (James et al., 1998). 'Investment' in children as future adults, allegedly ensures the health and wealth of the prospective population. For example, Government policy agendas around domestic violence and

³ For example, the UNCRC states that individuals are considered children until the age of 18; although all countries have signed up to the convention (with the current exception of South Sudan and the United States) childhood legally ends at different ages across societies

prevention education in schools, emerged in response to anxieties around the social, health and economic costs of the impact of domestic violence on the population. The UK government's most recent policy on compulsory Sex and Relationships Education in schools talks of improving knowledge, attributes and attainment to 'help young people to become successful and happy adults who make a meaningful contribution to society' (DfE, 2018: 4). Investment in young people is then conceptualised as an investment in the future of society, and Jenks (1996) refers to this as 'futuraity' to describe the commitment of the state to invest in the futures of children as human capital. In UK policy terms, children therefore remain positioned as 'becomings' (Qvortrup et al., 1994) and childhood as the period where children acquire the necessary skills and values to participate successfully in (adult) life. This public health approach which emphasises the future of children - as a future risk or at risk - conflicts with sociology of childhood theories which call attention to children as 'being' rather than 'becoming' and may be less likely to resonate with children in their present lives.

The positioning of children as 'threat', to both themselves and society (i.e. through crime as young offenders), justifies and indeed requires adults to exercise discipline and punishment in order to 'save' them (James et al., 1998). The necessity to discipline and control children is located in popular discourses around socialisation and developmental psychology, where adult discipline of children is often characterised as important for the 'normal' development of children (see Mayall, 2002). This is demonstrated in the extreme where the abuse inflicted on children or those living with domestic violence is justified through children (and/or women) needing to be controlled, with feminism making visible the abuse of power in families in all forms of child abuse and domestic violence. The construction of childhood and child maltreatment in welfare policy highlights the re-emergence towards 'individualised child protection systems' (Parton, 2014: 12) and its focus on the need to protect children from 'chaotic, neglectful and abusive homes' (HM Government, 2013: 22). However, Parton (2014) contends that rather than focussing on individual and family pathology regarding child maltreatment, the 'politics of child protection' needs to move towards a broader public health approach and the recognition that a range of social harms related to structural inequalities, including gender inequality and unequal power relations, cause the *social* problem of the maltreatment of children. A gendered approach towards the prevention of violence and child protection which emphasises respect for others' rights and autonomy resonates with sociology of childhood theories. These conceptualise children as 'being and becomings' (Uprichard, 2008), as active, independent people with rights and

agency, rather than with traditional socialisation theories which marginalise children as 'becoming' future adults.

On the other hand, children positioned as 'victim' draws on the notion of children as 'innocent' (Davies and Robinson, 2010; Meyer, 2007). Through their innocence, children are perceived as immature, ignorant, weak and vulnerable, thus creating the need for adult protection (Jenks, 1996). It is through this discourse of innocence that sexuality and morality became central issues in relation to children and talk around sexuality is still often deemed inappropriate with children, whose innocence has to be protected (Meyer, 2007). As such, children's innocence is a key discourse used to restrict and regulate children's knowledge, particularly in relation to information around sexuality⁴ (Robinson and Davies, 2017; Robinson, 2012). This discourse of innocence is framed and reinforced through traditional developmentalist perspectives, such as those of Piaget (1973) in which children are viewed as too cognitively and emotionally immature to contend with complex 'adult' concepts (Lombard, 2015; Robinson, 2012). Critics of developmental theories, on the other hand, perceive that sexuality as encompassed by intimacy, relationships, emotions and desires is central in the lives of children and young people, and to the development of their sense of identity (see Burman, 2016; Renold, 2005; Robinson 2012; Tsaliki, 2015). As noted above, the discourse of Children's Rights emerged in order to challenge the discourse of innocence, conceptualising children as active, independent people with rights, interests and agency (Lansdown, 2002). Nevertheless, the discourse of children's innocence continues to dominate (Meyer, 2007), as do discourses around children as 'risk' and threat to social order and, as noted above, children as future investment.

Thus, developmentalism and early socialisation theories remain dominant over the 'new sociology of children'. Long-established theoretical traditions ensure that the dominant concerns of developmental psychology – how individuals develop into adulthood - prevail. The focus of prevention work in this context, is on assuring the 'normal' development of children into effective, non-violent (or non-victim) adults. By contrast, the sociology of childhood focuses on the child as agent, as active participants in the construction of knowledge and everyday experiences and as children as a social group (as opposed to individuals), especially children's relations with adults in their daily lives. As Mayall (2002) maintains, children's agency can only be understood in the context of child-adult power

⁴ Meyer (2007) points out that sexuality (along with childhood) is a social construct, as what is construed as 'sexual' varies over time and across cultures.

relations, in which children's minority status renders them as relatively powerless, as inscribed in the practices of adults who govern them i.e. parents and teachers. Within shifting discourses of childhood, children have emerged on the domestic violence agenda in their own right, so that their needs cannot be assumed to be consistent with those of their mothers (Evang and Øverlien, 2015; Hester et al., 2007). The approach of prevention work in this context is through the empowerment of children, encouraging them to recognise and assert their rights and to actively seek support (from adults). Through the study of child-adult power relations, and ascribing agency to children, the sociology of children is a political venture, revealing children's accounts of their experiences and quality of their lives. Early socialisation theories arguably depoliticise children's actions, for example, assertiveness can be regarded not as the application of their rights, but as defiance and bad behaviour. Nevertheless, new sociological theories which accord children agency represent a significant development in the way children are conceptualised, even though this may not always accord with the reality of their everyday lives. Such understandings of childhood are implicit in any prevention work with children, as prevention work is based on the assumption that children have the capacity to adjust and to change their attitudes and behaviour in response to learning. Prevention through school-based work – where children are situated as a legitimate target – is now considered.

Preventing domestic violence through school-based work

Feminist theory and schools

The assumptions concerning the causes of domestic violence are fundamental to the development of school-based prevention programmes since these understandings shape programme content and method of delivery (Tutty, 2014). Feminist explanations are often invoked in the literature accompanying preventive programmes where domestic violence is located in the context of gender inequality and unequal power relations (see for example spectrumproject.co.uk; tender.org.uk). As noted above, prevention through school-based work is based on the premise that through intervention and education, certain undesirable attitudes and behaviours can be avoided. As violence is primarily considered to be behaviour that is learned, it can also be unlearned (Tutty et al., 2005) and preventing violence before it occurs is the main goal of primary prevention programmes directed at whole populations. As schools provide the context in which preventive education can be

delivered on a large scale to a relatively captive audience (see Ellis, 2014; Stanley et al., 2015), and as much of children's social learning takes place in school (Sudermann et al., 1995), schools are regarded as a 'natural environment for prevention programmes, addressing entire populations of children with an approach that fits with the purpose of the institution – providing education' (Tutty et al., 2005: 12).

However, schools are also recognised as significant institutions where children learn to perform gender (Renold, 2005) and the different forms of behaviour associated with unequal power relations. As such, there is a tension between schools as sites where violence can be disrupted, yet where violence is also learned. Feminist theory offers a conceptual framework to explain how and why gender inequity occurs in schools. For example, Davies' (1989) research in Australian primary schools was one of the first empirical studies to explore how young children's gender identities are constituted through discursive practices; how gender is created by and within individuals, and the different ways in which children are positioned by and position themselves within 'dominant heterosexual scripts' to construct their gendered performances. In her study of primary school children, Renold (2005: 168) identified that heterosexuality was 'a pervasive and normalising force mediating and regulating children's school-based relations and relationships in ways that constrain and empower how they live out their gendered identities as 'girls' and 'boys''. Judith Butler's conceptualisation of how gender is consistently performed through the 'heterosexual matrix' (Butler, 1990) has been particularly influential in exposing the ways that children's normative (heterosexual) gender identities are routinely produced and replicated. As gender is 'performed', and therefore socially constructed, gender is continually created and recreated through everyday interactions and practices.

As schools are sites where gendered subjectivities are learned and reproduced (Lombard and Harris; 2017; Renold, 2005; Sudermann et al., 1995), it is perceived that prevention strategies located in schools may assist in challenging them. Drawing on Butler's work on the performance of gender, Keddie offers insight into how the disruption of gender subjectivities can work in schools in practice (Nayler and Keddie, 2007; Keddie, 2008; 2010). She sought to examine how alternative understandings of gender can be facilitated in schools and describes how through a process of teachers' critical reflexivity, awareness of gender inequality can be raised and understandings of heteronormativity challenged. Accordingly, teachers spontaneously raise conversations with students in response to topics raised in books or incidents in the classroom in order to encourage students to consider contextualised understandings of gender. Taking this approach, teachers are frequently at

the forefront of the process of making gender visible in student's attitudes and behaviours (Atkinson and DePalma, 2009; Nayler and Keddie, 2007; Youdell, 2010). Maxwell (2014) offers a critique of this approach stressing that for teachers, the task of identifying occurrences of gender inequality, as well as being able to explain why it occurs and how it links to gender violence, requires high levels of expertise and time, and she therefore questions the feasibility of this approach. An alternative approach, she suggests, would be to carry out 'performative resignification' via peer education or mentoring initiatives that aim to raise awareness of gender-based violence.

Maxwell (2014) draws on experiences from her own research to describe how a group of young female students, who received training on gender-based violence, took on the role of challenging sexist comments and sexual bullying in school, as well as engaging in informal conversations and classroom-based work with their peers. By challenging sexist attitudes, peer mentors sought to unsettle normative understandings of gender roles and in doing so, encouraging alternative gender performances. However, in order to be executed effectively, such work needs 'a strong feminist agenda and [a] deep and critical knowledge about issues of gender construction' (Keddie, 2010: 364) and would also require a significant amount of time to achieve, which is rarely invested by schools. The limited impact that individual teachers and students can have in challenging attitudes and behaviours, means that a clearer explanation is required around how 'fleeting and momentary challenges to dominant norms and expectations' (Maxwell and Aggleton, 2014:110) can contribute to shifts in cultural norms. Although Butler's theory of gender performativity is important in thinking about how and why gender inequality exists, and how it can be reproduced through everyday occurrences, it does not immediately offer insight into how behaviour associated with unequal power relations can be disrupted, nor how more sustained attempts to destabilise the heterosexual matrix might be developed within schools or wider institutions (Maxwell, 2014).

Nevertheless, since the main goal of prevention is to stop behaviours before they begin or become engrained, young people are targeted in an attempt to influence the population whilst they are young and as such, schools are well positioned to affect change (Tutty et al., 2005). A gendered approach towards the prevention of violence and child protection as described in the work of Keddie (2008, 2010) and Maxwell (2014) above offer a useful framework which may be taken into account in any evaluation of prevention work in schools. In contrast to one-off, stand-alone programmes delivered by external agencies, these approaches attempt to generate sustained attitudinal change by challenging the

structures of power and inequality which underpin gendered violence through a holistic 'whole school' approach. Such an approach is embedded within schools, rather than supplementary, with measures addressing school ethos, policy, curriculum, staff capacity and capability, and young people's participation (DMSS, 2015). On this basis, teachers embrace a whole school approach, by challenging inequality and violence when it happens in schools and by not reinforcing gender divisions, for example, differentiating children by gender including expectations around boys' and girls' behaviour, roles within the classroom and use of physical spaces so that as far as possible gender bias is eliminated. Through this approach, teachers would be fully informed and educated to recognise, and be expected to challenge, gender stereotypes across both the formal and 'hidden' curriculum. Children would be encouraged and supported to recognise and confront behaviour which supports gender inequality by, for example, challenging sexist comments and bullying in school. Parents would have a solid understanding of gender and gender inequality and be encouraged to recognise their own preconceptions so that gender stereotypes are not reinforced at home (Maxwell, 2014). Although it is not an easy task to embed these approaches, as indicated through Keddie's and Maxwell's critiques of schools' initiatives, the sustained promotion of gender equality through a holistic 'whole school' approach is a valuable framework when considering a gendered approach towards violence prevention work.

Mechanisms and processes

Theoretical frameworks for change

The prevention of domestic violence and other forms of child harm through school-based work requires consideration of its theoretical foundations as it is suggested that effective programmes are informed by two types of theories: those related to the cause of the problem - why it happens - and those related to how change occurs - a theory of change (De Grace and Clarke, 2012). This issue is understood to be fundamental to the development of theoretically coherent programmes as the 'why' should inform the 'how' in prevention work in schools (Maxwell, 2014), yet the process of learning and how change occurs within school-based work is often not explained (Stanley et al., 2015). Furthermore, it is argued that programme developers should be encouraged to base programmes on existing theoretical frameworks and models of behaviour change to enable underlying mechanisms to be

identified (WHO, 2010). This would make replication easier, and the evaluation of programmes would be less problematic, as well as more comparable, if the theoretical starting point was well-defined (Midford et al., 2017).

The programme evaluated for this research drew on a feminist theory of gender inequity to explain why domestic violence occurs (as summarised above) and on drama-based education theory through its use of drama and interactive methods to engage young people in moving towards change. However, like many school-based prevention programmes, it was not based on an explicit theoretical model of how the process of learning happens. Below I explore some key theories in prevention education to understand how the mechanisms and process which are often implicit in such programmes achieve impact and facilitate change.

Social norms theory

Cultural and social norms are considered to be highly influential in shaping individual behaviour, including violence. In the context of domestic violence, cultural and social (gender) norms are the, often unspoken, rules or expectations of behaviour which shape the roles of men, women and children, and regulate the relationship between them. Individuals are discouraged from violating these norms through the threat of social disapproval, punishment or internal feelings of guilt and shame. Social norms can therefore protect against violence but can also support and encourage it. Yet, traditional social norms (such as stereotypical gender roles), support the acceptability of violence, thereby placing women (and children) at increased risk of violence. Efforts to change social norms which support the use of such violence are therefore key in the prevention of domestic violence (WHO, 2010). Social norms theory explains the occurrence of change through the influence of peers and the role this plays in decision making. The social norms approach asserts that people have mistaken perceptions of the attitudes and behaviour of others in that the prevalence of risky behaviours can be overestimated, whereas protective behaviours are underestimated (Berkowitz, 2004, 2005). This affects individual behaviour in two ways: firstly, by justifying and increasing the prevalence of risky behaviour; and secondly, by increasing the likelihood that individuals will remain silent about behaviour that causes them discomfort. The social norms approach used in health promotion interventions seeks to challenge these misperceptions by presenting a more realistic sense of actual behaviours, thereby reducing risky behaviour (WHO, 2009). The programme studied here, in common

with other such programmes (eg. McElwee and Fox, 2020; Miller et al., 2014), incorporates components which aim to change cultural and social norms among the peer group. These norms include gender stereotypes, beliefs about different forms of abusive behaviour, and the reinforcement of shared norms supportive of non-abusive behaviour as well as help seeking. The peer group dynamic therefore represents a mechanism with the potential to contribute to shifts in social norms.

Social learning theory

Social learning theory (or social cognitive theory) has been widely used to inform domestic violence prevention programmes (De Grace and Clarke, 2012; Stanley et al., 2015). As described earlier, social learning theory underpins prevention science and is deeply rooted in psychological discourses, wherein behaviour is attributed to the individual. It explains the occurrence of change as a process whereby through the acquirement of essential knowledge and skills, and through observational learning, behaviour can be reproduced. Social learning theory maintains that when a peer's or other individual's behaviour is observed and the consequences of that behaviour are critically reflected on, an individual remembers the sequence of events and uses this experience to guide subsequent behaviours (Bandura, 1986). Tender's programme encompasses social learning through engaging children in observation and critical reflection of situations presented by the peer group and through children's active participation in scenes which aim to promote the recognition of feelings associated with a rehearsed situation. These processes of learning are informed by educational drama theories that envisage learning occurring through exploring and reflecting on situations at a 'safe distance'. An outline of drama-based education theory is presented below.

Learning through drama

Theatre in Education (TIE) emerged in the UK in response to developments in educational theory following a period of post-war austerity during the early 1960s and at a time when more liberal thinking advanced the development of 'child-centred' education. TIE or 'learning by doing' developed in response to these new advances in educational theory (Pammenter, 2002). Jackson (1993: 4) describes the TIE 'programme' as:

‘...a coordinated and carefully structured pattern of activities, usually devised and researched by the company, around a topic of relevance both to the school curriculum and to the children’s own lives, presented in school by the company and involving the children directly in an experience of the situations and problems that the topic throws up.’

The programme studied here alongside other such programmes (Bell and Stanley, 2006; DMSS, 2012; Hale et al., 2012; McElwee and Fox, 2020) utilises ‘educational drama’ as a key pedagogical approach within TIE, a model which involves the active participation of children, in or out of role, in drama activities in which ideas are explored at their own level (Jackson and Vine, 2013). Sometimes termed ‘process drama’ (Bolton, 1992), it is an approach to working with children and young people based around improvisation techniques such as ‘still image’ and role play to enable participants to ‘step into someone else’s shoes’ and to explore ideas, emotions, values and actions from different viewpoints. The strategy of whole class improvisation, with ‘teacher-in-role’ - a technique whereby the teacher takes part in the drama - allows the teacher, or programme facilitator, to take a low-status role, improvising to seek help or advice from the learners. Reflection is a key feature of educational drama, allowing participants to critically reflect on the characters and situations presented during the drama activity (McNaughton, 2014).

The potential of drama as a medium through which to achieve personal and social change has long been acknowledged (Anderson and Dunn, 2013; Cahill, 2002; Jackson, 1993). Bolton (1993) argues that educational drama can achieve change in understanding, by offering a safe ‘distance’ from which values, behaviours and alternative choices can be examined, and solutions explored. At the same time, drama can have a strong influence on personal and social development, including the improvement of for example, ‘group interaction’ and ‘self-esteem’ (Bolton, 1993) and the development of positive relationships between learners (McNaughton, 2014). The use of teacher-in-role has been suggested as a strategy to enable vulnerable learners who perceive themselves as having low status to join in the drama. As well as assisting or protecting the individual ‘isolated child’, an alternative perspective is ‘to attend to the health of the group that has constructed barriers and utilise strategies to generate a more compassionate, secure and inclusive group dynamic’ (Cahill, 2002: 16). As discussed above, new theories of childhood challenge the idea of the child as a blank canvas upon which knowledge is inscribed and passively received. If the child is conceptualised as dynamic and participatory in their own construction of knowledge, these active mechanisms of learning are relevant to considering the ways that learning occurs and

through which change can be achieved, and this point is considered further below in the section '*Consideration of theoretical frameworks to inform school-based prevention programmes*'.

Empirical studies of school-based domestic violence prevention programmes

The review of the evidence base for school-based domestic violence prevention programmes undertaken here focuses on those programmes delivered to primary school children under the age of 11, since the majority of evaluations to date have focussed on adolescents in secondary education. In 2015, Stanley et al. conducted a major systematic review of the international literature, including a review of the UK grey literature⁵ to identify evidence relating to preventive interventions on domestic violence for children and young people in the general population. The systematic review of the international literature found that most studies on domestic violence prevention focused on young people aged 10 to 16 and that notably none of the published studies reported on programmes for children under the age of 10. The six reported programmes that did include 10 year olds (Black et al., 2012; Elias-Lambert et al., 2010; Macgowan, 1997; Taylor et al., 2013; Taylor et al., 2010a; Taylor et al., 2010b) reported their data alongside those from older children in their studies and findings for these age bands could not be disaggregated.

The review of the UK grey literature identified 18 independently conducted evaluations reporting on a total of 28 prevention programmes on domestic violence; the majority of these programmes also targeted young people in secondary schools: only four programmes were aimed at primary school children under the age of 11 (Anonymous Author, 2007; Datta et al., 2005; Manship and Perry, 2012; Women's Aid Federation of Northern Ireland (WAFNI), 2005). Six programmes were aimed at school children of all ages (Ellis, 2006; Hale et al., 2012; Hester and Westmarland, 2005; Reid Howie Associates, 2002; Stead et al., 2011, Thiara and Ellis, 2005) and three programmes were designed to be delivered to children of all ages in young people's centres outside school (Against Violence & Abuse (AVA) & Institute of Education (IOE), 2013). Of the four programmes aimed exclusively at primary school children, three reported little or no data. The evaluation of the Miss Dorothy programme (Datta et al., 2005) for primary school children focussed on personal safety

⁵ Grey literature are publications which are published outside commercial or academic publishing and distribution channels

through encouraging self-empowerment and raising self-esteem and although the study did not make specific reference to domestic violence, it remained in the review as it was the second most commonly reported programme in the mapping survey conducted as part of the review (Stanley et al., 2015a). Datta et al's (2005) study reported improvements in children's perceptions of self, increased feelings of safety and improved understanding of self-protective behaviours. Evidence drew on both survey data and children's and teachers' experiences from interviews and focus groups, however only eight primary schools located in England were included in this study meaning that findings from this small-scale study cannot be generalised to the overall population of primary children. Although, feminist and social norms theories emerged strongly as causal theories of domestic violence from expert interviews and the literature reviews undertaken as part of the Stanley et al's (2015) review, however theoretical models outlining learning processes were not universally explicit across programmes and a lack of theorising about how change occurs was common.

Evaluations of those programmes reported in the grey literature review that were designed for both primary and secondary school children were mostly qualitative and generally reported an increase in knowledge and awareness; teachers tended to regard programmes as positive for children. Evaluations conducted by Ellis (2006) and Reid Howie (2002) reported findings on programmes based on a combination of methods including pre and post survey data, focus groups with children, and adult interviews; Ellis also drew on observations of programme delivery. Findings from the evaluation of the Zero Tolerance Respect programme (Reid Howie, 2002) reported increases in knowledge and skills by both staff and students including better communication skills and understandings of gender, violence and abuse. Ellis (2006) similarly reports increased understandings of the impact of domestic violence, gender equality and help seeking amongst both primary and secondary school children. Although these programme evaluations provide useful evidence of the impact of school-based programmes on children across a range of ages, findings are restricted by the limited number and location of schools in both studies: five Midlands based primary and four secondary schools in Ellis' (2006) study; two primary and two secondary schools based in Edinburgh and Glasgow in the Reid Howie (2002). As both these studies were conducted over ten years ago, findings may be less relevant. Lee et al. (2015) more recently reported findings from their evaluation of 'Equation', a schools-based programme for primary and secondary aged children which adopts a whole-school approach in seeking to prevent domestic violence. However, their evaluation of this programme focuses only on older children across three secondary schools.

The evaluation of the Relationships without Fear programme (Hale et al., 2012; Fox et al., 2014) was the first UK controlled study on domestic violence prevention reporting on both secondary and primary aged children (along with partner programmes in Europe) and included both survey and focus group data. A total of 803 primary school children, aged 7 to 11, completed pre-test and post-test surveys in seven intervention and seven control schools and two focus groups were conducted with a total of thirteen children aged 10 to 11. It was reported that overall the programme had a positive impact on primary school children's attitudes towards retaliation aggression and domestic violence but had less impact on general attitudes towards aggression and help seeking behaviours. Girls were reported to be less accepting of aggression and domestic violence compared to boys; older children, aged 10 to 11, were more accepting of aggression than their younger peers (Hale et al., 2012). However, schools participating in this study were located in just one part of England (West Midlands) and the evaluation was conducted within a one-year time frame (March 2011 to February 2012), meaning that evidence to support the longer-term outcomes is limited. Nevertheless, as the first UK controlled study, this research has been widely drawn upon in subsequent research and discussion, including that reported in this thesis, to develop understandings of the role of schools in delivering violence prevention education (Lee et al., 2015; Ollis, 2014; Sanders-McDonagh et al., 2015; Stanley et al., 2015).

No further evaluations which specifically address domestic violence prevention programmes for children under the age of 11 have been identified since this major review took place. However, as part of the drive by the Welsh Government to tackle domestic violence, the Hafan Cymru Spectrum Project is currently being funded to raise awareness of domestic violence in all secondary and primary schools in Wales, with an ongoing evaluation by the University of Wales due for completion in 2020 (www.uwtsd.ac.uk).

At present, most of the evidence for school-based domestic violence prevention programmes comes from studies based in the United States and Canada. However, in contrast to the UK, Australia is now becoming established as a leading nation in the effort to prevent violence against women and children, following implementation of substantive policy frameworks. Under the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022* (the National Plan), released in 2011, all Australian governments made a long-term commitment to reduce violence against women. This framework established that gender inequality was the key underlying determinant of violence against women and that a collaborative national approach with prevention efforts at the institution, organisation, community and individual level, would be most effective (Our Watch, 2015). Under the

National Plan, all Australian states and territories are required to have local implementation plans, with primary prevention set as an outcome on which states and territories have to report on.

Australian policy in the field of domestic violence prevention has resulted in the development of school-based interventions for younger children in Australia. In particular, a recent study by Robinson et al. (2017) based in New South Wales and Victoria, Australia, reported findings on parents' attitudes towards children's 'sexuality education' in primary schools. This study formed part of a larger project exploring practices of building primary school children's understandings of respectful relationships. A total of 342 parents completed on-line surveys, and 31 individual interviews and six focus groups were completed. Robinson et al. (2017) describe how parents' discourses around sexuality shape their understanding and approaches to their children's sexual knowledge, and how these discourses affect parents' concerns and perceived responsibilities in their communication about sexuality and relationships with their children. They reported that the majority of parents in their study believed that sexuality education was relevant and important to primary school children and that a collaborative approach should be taken between families and schools. This provides a valuable insight, as parents' views on these issues are rarely reported.

Despite the current lack of evidence, in view of current changes to Australian policy, it is expected that the evidence base around domestic violence prevention work targeted at younger children will become more established over time. As the current UK policy context is changing rapidly, this is also likely to give rise to additional evidence in respect of younger children.

Theoretical frameworks informing the study

Drawing on feminist theory and sociology of childhood to inform the research design

The methodological approach to this study is underpinned by an ethical, theoretical and conceptual framework informed by feminist research and the sociology of childhood. It is acknowledged that existing debates within the literature draw attention to the compatibility of feminism and the politics of childhood and the 'complex relationship' (Rosen and Twamley, 2018:9) between these theoretical frameworks. However, drawing on the

principles of the sociology of childhood, children are conceptualised in this study as social actors, as active participants in the construction of knowledge and everyday experiences, whose voices should be heard. Through this approach, children are understood as experts in their own lives whose views should be elicited on issues that affect them (i.e. Evang and Øverlien, 2015). Feminist methodologies which take account of children's experience and knowledge (Mayall, 2002; Renold, 2005), are used to elicit children's views, encouraging children to speak for themselves and to explore their experience of participation in school-based prevention in order to develop a child standpoint. In adopting this framework, children are viewed as central to the research design and mixed methods are utilised in this study to both enable children's participation and to minimise the power disparities (Morrow and Richards, 1996) by using methods and techniques suitable to the range of children's preferences and competencies. Feminist methodological values, which make visible the child-adult power relations, in which children's minority status render them relatively powerless, are drawn upon to recognise the imbalance of power in the research relationship. Combining the research philosophies of feminism and the sociology of childhood has allowed ethical considerations such as potential tensions between children's vulnerability, their agency and rights to participation, to be identified and addressed. Drawing upon these paradigms, through a reflexive methodology, children are respected, empowered and validated as competent and active participants in the co-construction of knowledge (James et al., 1998; Morrow and Richards, 1996).

Consideration of theoretical frameworks to inform school-based prevention programmes

Placing school-based prevention work in a framework of feminist and childhood sociological theories enables them to be conceptualised as a tool for the empowerment of children, encouraging them to recognise and assert their rights and to actively seek support. The conceptualisation of children as people with agency and rights, in the context of children's minority status in child-adult relations, could be addressed within programme design, delivery and content were this framework to be fully adopted. For example, through their prior experiences, children may understand their empowerment as dependent on the consent of adults, and that their rights can only be asserted if adults permit it.

Prevention programmes that are informed by public health prevention theory with its emphasis on risk and future harm may struggle to offer children active engagement in

programme content and delivery based on an understanding of them as social actors. This conflict may be compounded by the delivery of programmes within an educational setting where the power inequality between the adult teacher and the child means that children have little choice whether to participate in school-based activities. In the context of policy agendas around domestic violence prevention in schools, children remain positioned as 'becomings' (Qvortrup et al., 1994) and childhood as the period where children acquire the necessary skills and values to participate successfully in (adult) life. This research provides an opportunity to explore how competing theories play out within the prevention programme targeted at primary school children, studied here.

Summary of Literature Review Chapter

- Prevention as a strategy for social change is dominant in social policy, particularly in relation to policy regarding children. Public health and prevention science both employ prevention as strategies to prevent violence before it starts, and in doing so both govern and regulate the conduct of children, with the aim of identifying future risks and moderating undesirable outcomes.
- Public health and prevention science arguably dilute an understanding of domestic violence as a gendered issue and feminist understandings of domestic violence, as an outcome of gender inequality, are frequently obscured within prevention programmes which adopt a public health approach. A gendered approach towards prevention, rooted in an understanding of autonomy and respect for others' rights enables structural, institutional and individual inequalities to be recognised and challenged.
- Children are legitimised as the target audience for prevention through a number of competing discourses: socialisation and child development theories which position children as future adults and who are coerced through prevention strategies towards adulthood through self-government; and on the other hand, sociology of childhood theories which locate children as active agents where prevention strategies seek to promote children's empowerment and assertion of their rights. Through a sociology of childhood lens, prevention strategies become relevant to children in their current lives as opposed to public health approaches which locate children as being at future risk.
- Schools are the prime site in which large and captive audiences of children are targeted through prevention programmes. Feminist theories demonstrate how gender performance is learned and reproduced in schools, as well as the different forms of behaviour associated with unequal power relations, making visible the tension between schools as sites where violence can be disrupted, yet where violence is also learned.
- Children can be affected by different forms of violence at various stages of their lives including bullying, peer -to-peer violence, cyber bullying, child sexual abuse and

domestic violence. This points to the need for integrated programmes which offer an effective approach to preventing multiple forms of violence.

- It is understood that effective prevention programmes are informed by theories relating to both cause, and those related to how change occurs. However, a lack of theorising about how change occurs is common. In contrast to thinking about the child as passive recipients of knowledge, active mechanisms and processes of learning are identified as relevant to the current programme, including theories of social norms, social learning and learning through educational drama.
- The UK policy context is changing rapidly with compulsory Sex and Relationships Education in secondary schools and relationships education in primary schools due to commence in September 2020. Despite this, the existing knowledge base about the effectiveness of school-based prevention work with younger children is currently limited. This study, which draws upon a feminist framework and sociology of childhood theories to inform school-based prevention education, will provide essential evidence which will contribute to the current lack of knowledge in the UK context.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

Introduction

This chapter describes the research process undertaken to evaluate the primary school programme selected for study. The research questions on which the study is based are outlined at the start of the chapter followed by an account of the mixed methods approach adopted. An overview of the programme is then provided. An explanation of the research design, including the design of the research tools and the process of piloting them is then presented. This is followed by consideration of the ethical issues in undertaking research with children. The chapter ends with a reflexive account of the process of conducting the research in primary schools including how data was collected and analysed, and some overall reflections on the research experience.

Research questions

Although a significant number of international studies report the impact of prevention work on young people in secondary schools, evidence for the impact of prevention work in primary schools is currently limited (See Chapter Two). In view of this, the research aims to provide evidence through the detailed study of one primary school programme of both the views and experiences of those involved in violence prevention programmes as well as understanding the impact of such a programme on children's learning. In identifying this gap in the current knowledge base, this study aims to contribute by considering three main research questions:

1. Can preventive school-based programmes improve younger children's knowledge and skills to enable them to recognise different forms of violence, including domestic violence towards themselves and others?
2. How can impact be achieved for younger children and what forms of delivery influence outcomes?
3. How can the views of children and adults inform the development of relationships education in primary schools?

Research design

This is a small-scale, pre–post study using a mixed methods design. A mixed methods approach to research involves combining quantitative and qualitative research methods. Since the 1950s (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011), there has been contentious debate about whether combining the two paradigms is either desirable or feasible (Bryman, 2003; Guba and Lincoln, 1994; Morgan, 1998). This debate has been conducted at two different levels; the first concerns the epistemological and ontological differences between quantitative and qualitative research which traditionally were viewed as incompatible and, secondly, debates around the technicalities of data collection and analysis where methods are more readily considered compatible and susceptible to being combined. Traditionally research projects, and often researchers, were typically associated with one paradigm or the other, yet an increase in the use of mixed methods research since the early 1980s (Bryman, 2016) has challenged the boundaries between epistemology, ontology and methods (e.g. Letherby, 2004). Mixed methods research is not considered superior to single method research since it ‘has to be dovetailed to research questions, just as all research methods must be.’ (Bryman, 2016: 657). Rather, methods should be appropriate to the research questions and research questions may require both qualitative and quantitative methods, as is the case in this study (see section ‘*Rationale for doing mixed methods research*’ below).

Consideration of feminist methodology

There has been much debate as to whether there exists a distinctive feminist methodology (e.g. Kelly et al., 1994; Letherby, 2004; Maynard, 1990; Oakley, 1998; Stanley and Wise, 1993), although it is also acknowledged that there exists not one feminism but different and competing strands. Qualitative methods are viewed by many feminists as more compatible with the feminist ethos of subjectivity, interpretation and in-depth understanding and feminist researchers have ‘celebrated qualitative methods as best suited to the project of hearing women’s accounts of their experiences’ (Oakley, 1998: 708 cited in Letherby 2004). By contrast, quantitative methods and their alignment to objectivity, statistics and social facts are often viewed as incompatible with the research philosophies of feminism; quantification and control over variables is viewed as a masculine approach and suppresses the voices of women (Mies, 1999; Maynard, 1998 cited in Bryman 2016). It is the tension between the epistemological disparities of interpretivist methods over positivist ones, and

ontological differences between socially constructed meaning and objective facts, which are viewed as incompatible in this debate.

In her 1998 paper, Oakley suggested that the main methodological concern of feminist sociologists was whether qualitative or quantitative methods were used to find out about people's lives and argued that feminist research can use both qualitative and qualitative methods. However, in response to Oakley's paper, Letherby (2004) argued that many feminists are not concerned about the particular types of methods used but rather to ensure that the methods used are appropriate to the research questions and that the issue of power relations are addressed in research relationships (e.g. Kelly et al. 1994; Stanley and Wise, 1993). As noted by Hammersley, 'a separate methodological paradigm based on distinctive political and philosophical assumptions' was both impossible and non-desirable (in Lombard, 2015: 35). Many feminist researchers use the same methods as traditional social researchers, but it is the underpinning epistemological and methodological values which define the research as feminist. As Letherby (2006: 179) points out, 'there is no particular method that is intrinsically feminist; rather it is the particular ways in which methods are used that is critical to the issue'. Letherby argues that the central concern is 'the relationship between the process and the product, between doing and knowing: how what we do affects what we get'. As such, rather than the quantitative/qualitative divide, it is the 'process and product/doing and knowing' relationship, along with a recognition of the power imbalances within research relationships and the appropriateness of the method to the research question, which is central to feminist methodologies. Mixed methods research can therefore be utilised within a feminist research framework to express both the experiences of a group through qualitative methods, and to define the attitudes and the behaviour of the research sample through quantitative methods, in order to implement social change (Miner-Rubino et al., cited in Bryman, 2016).

Feminist methodological values can be usefully linked to thinking about children's lives and research where children and young people are the participants. The shared status of women and children as minority groups, with their relative lack of rights and their restriction to the domestic sphere 'resulted in women and children being ignored, marginalised, or treated as objects or unreliable subjects within research' (Lombard, 2015: 36). Mayall argues that just as women were traditionally excluded from sociological consideration, in that 'the gender order was not recognised or problematized' (2002: 24), children too have traditionally been excluded from sociology as childhood was viewed as a 'preparatory' rather than 'participatory' phase (see Chapter Two for a more detailed account of the

sociology of childhood). In response, feminist methodology sought to make the invisible, visible:

Building on the critique of 'malestream' sociological concepts, feminists have taken up the point that to build an adequate sociology it is crucial to take account of *people's own experiential knowledge*, how they experience and understand the social world and the structures of knowledge that are not of their making.' (Mayall, 2002: 25, emphasis in original)

Mayall argues that just as women experience a 'disjunction' between how they are supposed to experience their lives and how they *actually* experience their lives, children too experience such disjunctions 'between how they experience life and how, as a child, they are supposed to' (2002: 25). It is therefore essential that feminist methodologies take account of children's experience and knowledge and explore how their experience is shaped and to 'use this information to develop a child standpoint' (Mayall, 2002:26). Traditionally, children were viewed as objects to be studied and research focused *on* children rather than *for* or *with* children (Fargas-Malet et al., 2010). However, with the development of 'the new social studies of childhood' (e.g. James et al., 1998; Mayall, 2002) which focuses on children as beings rather than 'becomings' (Qvortrup et al., 1994) and the children's rights discourse (e.g. the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child⁶, 1989; HM Government Children Act, 2004), children are now viewed as competent and reliable 'social actors, who are 'expert' in their own lives' (James and Prout, 1997). This led to the adaptation of traditional techniques and the development of innovative ones such as 'participatory' research methodologies, whereby children are increasingly involved in the design and dissemination⁷ of research (e.g. Punch, 2002; Moore et al., 2008). Punch (2002) argued that the choice of research methods is influenced by adults' perceptions of childhood and the status of children and she distinguished between three approaches in which research with children is similar or different from research with adults: those who consider children to be 'essentially indistinguishable from adults' (James et al., 1998: 31) and therefore employ the same methods as adult participants; those who perceive children as very different to adults

⁶ Fargas-Malet et al., 2010 identified in particular Article 12: State parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child; and Article 13: The right to freedom of expression, including the freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds.

⁷ Due to time and resource limitations, this was not possible in this research.

and use ethnography to understand the child's world; and those who perceive children to be similar to adults but possess different competencies (James et al., 1998).

This research is informed by feminist theory and the sociology of childhood. Together, these approaches put children at the centre of the research design. Within a feminist research framework in which varied methods are utilised, children are listened to so that their views and experiences are taken into account; children's attitudes are defined through quantitative methods, reflecting the aim of the research to measure children's learning and knowledge, whilst simultaneously enabling participation through methods suited to their competencies and preferences. Feminist methodological values, which make visible the child-adult power relations, are drawn upon to recognise and challenge the imbalance of power in the research relationship. Sociology of childhood theory provides a framework in which children are understood as possessing agency, as competent social actors whose voices are heard, and as active participants in the construction of knowledge (James et al., 1998). Combining feminism and sociology of childhood theories enables identification and exploration of adult-child power imbalances, children's agency and rights to participation.

Rationale for doing mixed methods research

The combination of methods chosen for this study reflect both the aims of the research and the theoretical framework; an emphasis on feminist theories of gender and violence and the argument that these are socially constructed means that a qualitative approach to explore children's and adults' responses and understanding is appropriate. The cognitive theories of learning (i.e. Piaget, 1973) harnessed in preventive interventions such as that studied here, also suggest the value of measuring learning and knowledge through both qualitative and quantitative methods.

There are a number of ways in which methods can be combined and utilised. Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) distinguish between four common types of mixed methods design:

1. Convergent parallel design; quantitative and qualitative data are collected simultaneously and given equal priority
2. Exploratory sequential design; qualitative data is collected prior to quantitative data typically to develop survey questions
3. Explanatory sequential design; quantitative data is collected prior to qualitative data in order to explain quantitative findings

4. Embedded design; either quantitative or qualitative data is used as priority approach but draws on the other when one approach is insufficient to address specific questions

Drawing on these distinctions, this evaluation specifically adopts an embedded design. Although qualitative methods of data collection are the main means of addressing the research questions, a quantitative approach is used in the survey design as a supplementary component to the qualitative methods to further understand the impact of the programme on the children's learning. An embedded design allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the issues under enquiry: for example, information not accessible via the children's survey is more accessible via the children's focus group interviews and observations.

As this research is relevant for a number of audiences including: those developing and delivering programmes; programme funders; policy makers and academics, using a mixed methods approach which mainly draws on qualitative techniques, supplemented by quantitative survey data, may be useful for practitioners to evidence findings for funders and policy makers. Bryman (2016: 641) refers to this approach to mixed methods as 'utility or improving the usefulness of findings' whereby combining qualitative and quantitative data has more practical benefits for practitioners. Employing mixed methods allows for multiple perspectives of the different stakeholders to be captured and legitimises the various accounts, which often arise from different hierarchies, particularly those between adults and children, within the school community (Alldred et al., 2003). In this sense, employing both approaches enhances the integrity of the findings.

On the other hand, there are a number of potential challenges of a mixed methods design. These could include managing large quantities of data from various sources which may be facilitated by the use of a range of research software for data storage and sorting. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to store and manage survey data and NVivo computer software was used for qualitative data analysis. The different types of data collated through a mixed methods study need to be synthesised in order to avoid simply producing a selection of disconnected findings, and any conflicting findings, which might arise from the different approaches to data collection, also need to be managed. In order that findings produced through differing data sources are transparent and well-defined, quantitative survey data are presented separately to the analysis of qualitative data from

children's focus groups and adult interviews in this thesis. Key findings from the various sources are then synthesised in the discussion chapter.

Selecting the programme for study

The research process began with the task of finding a programme to evaluate. My aim was to identify a primary prevention programme (as opposed to a secondary intervention programme – see Chapter Two for a description of the different approaches to prevention), which had not previously been evaluated. In total, 28 organisations were approached at the outset of this study, with the intention of providing much needed evidence of the effectiveness of school-based domestic violence prevention education for primary school children. These included local and national domestic violence organisations, local and national children's charities, a local county schools partnership and individual primary schools. Despite findings reported by Stanley et al.'s (2015) PEACH study that UK programmes were mostly delivered in mainstream secondary schools, with mainstream primary schools being the second most frequent setting, the task of identifying a local universally delivered prevention programme (as opposed to secondary interventions targeting children already experiencing domestic violence) proved to be challenging. This may in part be due to the short-term funding of such programmes, limiting their sustainability (Stanley et al., 2011). The intention to identify a locally based programme was also driven by the restricted funding available for a PhD study to cover travel and associated costs. However, as no locally delivered programme was identified, alongside pressures to identify a suitable programme within a limited time frame, the search was widened to include national organisations. My knowledge of Tender – a London based charity - was acquired through my involvement in the PEACH study, which had identified the organisation's work in primary and secondary schools to prevent domestic abuse and sexual violence as relevant to the thesis topic. As well as time and funding constraints, programme developers also needed to be willing to allow me access to their programme. In a climate of intensive competition between organisations for limited funding, this meant time needed to be spent building trust. I first contacted Tender in February 2016, followed by a number of discussions, and in April 2016 Tender granted me access to their Healthy Relationships programme for primary school children. Although the decision to base this study on Tender's Healthy Relationships programme was in part opportunistic, this is a well-developed programme, having been widely delivered in primary schools across London since

2014. Furthermore, the inclusion of a drama/theatre component is recommended as an appropriate feature of violence prevention programmes in schools (Stanley et al., 2015) and this is a key feature of the Tender programme.

Research process

The following sections describe the research process in the sequence in which it occurred. As the evaluation was conducted alongside the delivery of the programme, the research process needed to coincide with the timing of the programme. An initial agreement with Tender that the evaluation would be based on programme delivery in three primary schools in the approaching school year (September 2016), meant that the design of the research tools, alongside piloting and gaining ethical approval took place before the process of accessing schools and data collection began.

Designing the research tools

Children's survey

The children's survey was designed to be administered at three different stages; pre-programme, post programme and six months after the programme (Appendix 10, 11 and 12)⁸. As the paper survey was to be administered to children by the class teacher (and not the researcher), a short list of guidelines was included at the start of the survey, and class teachers were instructed to highlight these for the children before commencing. These guidelines specified, first, that children could discontinue the survey if they wished to do so, even after starting: as most tasks at school are compulsory the children may not have felt in a position to 'dissent' (Morrow and Richards, 1996). Second, children were reassured that the survey was not a test. Punch (2002: 328) indicates that as the school environment is organised and controlled by adult teachers, 'research conducted at school should take into account that children may feel pressure to give 'correct' answers to research questions' and it was therefore important to let the children know there were no right or wrong answers. Third, children were directed to put their survey in the envelope provided upon completion,

⁸ Pre/Post/6 month surveys are respectively referred to as Survey 1, Survey 2 and Survey 3 from this point.

so their answers remained private and confidential. During my initial meeting at each school, teachers were asked if it would be helpful to children for the teacher to read each question out loud to enable children to complete the survey at the same pace: this was the procedure agreed upon within each school.

The first section of the survey asked for information on children's gender, age, disability and learning difficulty. Children were also asked to write their full name, so that surveys from the three stages could be matched. An instruction at the end of the survey directed children to put their completed survey in a sealed envelope, provided with each survey, before handing it to their teacher. This meant that children's responses could not be identified by their teacher or other school staff. Children's anonymity is central to the ethical context of this research (see section '*Ethical Framework*' below): children's names have been anonymised in this thesis and will remain anonymous in all outputs resulting from this research. In considering the information needed from the participants, it was anticipated that children would be able to give their name, gender and age without difficulty. Asking children whether they had a disability or learning difficulty was considered to be more problematic as I was aware that children as young as age 10 and 11 may not be diagnosed with a learning disability and, even if this was the case, some children may not be aware of it. Several people, including primary school teachers known to me, as well as those mothers who took part in the pilot stage, were consulted for help and advice on this issue. Although this established that children were not usually formally diagnosed at this age, it was suggested that some children may be aware of 'being different'. Therefore, I decided to include the question, but to treat responses cautiously. I also considered asking the children about their ethnicity, however, I was mindful of keeping the number of questions to a minimum, and as children may not know the 'correct' answer to this question, and so 'feel their responses to be inadequate' (Morrow and Richards, 1996: 101), I decided not to include this question.⁹

Consistent with previous research findings (McElearney et al., 2011) which found no robust measures of children's understanding of concepts across a range of topics, a composite survey was produced by merging elements of the Children's Knowledge of Abuse Questionnaire (CKAQ) (Tutty, 1995) alongside a number of items from Ellis' (2006) study and a number of individually customised items reflecting topics specific to the programme. The

⁹ Ofsted reports and gov.uk/school-performance-service were consulted for this information in respect of the whole school, however information on child ethnicity was not available. See Appendix 18 for information on the participating schools.

survey included both closed and open-ended questions. The closed questions comprised twelve Likert-scale items to measure children's knowledge and attitudes. Children were asked to select one of five possible statements on how much they agreed or disagreed with each item including: 'Agree a lot', 'Agree a bit', 'Not sure', 'Disagree a bit', 'Disagree a lot'. Although the questions reflected the main topics covered in the programme, a wider range of questions could have been included. However, my aim was to keep the time required¹⁰ to complete the survey to a reasonable level, so that children didn't become tired and disinterested, and so that teachers were not put off by the length of time required to complete the task during lessons.

Two open-ended vignette questions were used to examine children's normative attitudes and these questions also reflected programme topics. Finch (1987) argues that the study of beliefs, values and norms in empirical research has always posed methodological difficulties and that this relates to theoretical and philosophical questions about the extent to which human action both reflects and shapes cultural and ideological influences. These difficulties are compounded in survey research with its limitations on wording and coding and 'highly questionable attitude measurement scales' (Finch, 1987: 105). As such, vignettes are a technique which may help to overcome these limitations in measuring normative attitudes. Finch (1987: 105) has described vignettes as 'short stories about hypothetical characters in specified circumstances, to which the interviewee is invited to respond'. Barter and Renold (1999: 1) maintain that vignettes can usefully 'allow actions in context to be explored; to clarify people's judgements; and to provide a less personal and therefore less threatening way of exploring sensitive topics'. In the current study, vignettes were used as a complementary method within the survey to elicit children's perceptions, attitudes and beliefs to potentially sensitive scenarios which reflected those explored in the programme. Finch (1987: 113) cautions that 'asking about what a third party 'ought' to do in a given situation is not the same thing as asking respondents what they themselves think they ought to do'. As such, there is no assumption that children's responses to the vignette questions directly reflect how they would behave in reality.

The first vignette was based on a scenario performed during the programme: the aim of the scenario, as described by Tender staff, is for the children to identify warning signs of an unhealthy relationship in the exchange between a male and a female character. The content of the vignette was also guided by a vignette developed by Lombard (2015: 53) in her

¹⁰ During piloting the average time taken was 10 to 15 minutes.

research on young people's understandings of men's violence against women. In Lombard's research, vignettes were used to provide context and a starting point for discussions among children participating in the research. As the vignette in the current research was used in a survey context, children did not explore the relationship presented through reflexive group discussion, as the young people participating in Lombard's research did. Although children's responses to the scenario presented in the vignette may not reflect how they would behave in reality, the vignettes offered a contextualised method to elicit children's perceptions, attitudes and beliefs in respect of the dynamics of interpersonal relationships (Barter and Renold 1999) explored in the programme. The first vignette was presented as follows:

Emily and James have been girlfriend and boyfriend for two months. Emily's favourite outfit is her red dress. One day James asked Emily not to wear it anymore because he said it makes her look stupid.

This vignette was followed by two open questions in the survey: the first asked the children what they think 'Emily' should do, and the second asked them to explain why.

The second vignette was based on another scenario performed during the programme on the topic of peer pressure and sexual bullying: after the scenario is performed during the programme children are encouraged to advise the character what she should do. Tender staff were consulted for advice on the wording of this vignette, to ensure it reflected the situation and the wording used in the scene¹¹.

Sofia is feeling very confused. One day her best friend Harry asked her to send him a photo of her private parts because he said it would be funny. Harry said he would keep it a secret and wouldn't share the photo with anyone. He said if Sofia didn't send the photo she wouldn't be any fun. She doesn't want to send it but Harry is her best friend, so she doesn't know what to do.

This vignette was followed by a question in the survey asking children what advice they might give to 'Sofia', and therefore reflected the structure of the task during the programme.

¹¹ One school was anxious about the use of the phrase 'private parts' in this question as discussed in the 'Research Process' section of this chapter.

Barter and Renold (1999: 4) recommend that vignettes 'are readily understood, are internally consistent and not too complex' and 'must be plausible and real to participants' (Neff, 1979 cited in Barter and Renold, 1999). For that reason, when developing the vignettes, I was mindful that they should be both concise and believable so that the children accepted and engaged with them. Although children did not participate in the design of the vignettes due to access and time limitations (see *Reflections of the research design process* below), children were consulted about the content and wording of vignettes during the pilot stage and this reassured me that the length, wording and content of the vignettes were acceptable to those children.

Questions relating to children's satisfaction with the programme were included at the end of Survey 2: one closed question about their enjoyment of the programme, and one open question on what aspects of the programme they would like to change. In Survey 3, two open questions asked for children's reflections on their learning. The first asked whether children had talked to their friends about the programme afterwards in order to assess the extent to which programme messages were shared and sustained after the programme; the second asked children whether they thought the programme had helped them. These topics were explored more fully in the children's focus groups but were included in the survey to elicit a wider number of views.

Children's focus groups

Focus groups (or group interviews) are commonly used as a method for interviewing children (Einarsdottir, 2007; Lombard, 2015; Mayall, 2002; Spratling et al., 2012). Responding to standardised measures of knowledge and attitudes in the survey requires children to be able to recognise and interpret information and strategies but recalling concepts by responding to open interview questions is considered to be more challenging (Tutty, 2014). Unlike individual interviews, group interviews are based on interactions between participants and, as such, children are able to explore their own and other children's ideas and attitudes more reflexively and agree or challenge others' responses (Lombard, 2015). Focus groups also allow the views of a larger number of children to be included within a limited amount of time compared to individual interviews. However, due to their minority status, it is understood that children are not used to expressing their views or being taken seriously by adults (Punch, 2002). This is particularly relevant in the school

setting where it is adults, as teachers, who are understood as ‘knowers’ and children as ‘learners’, where children expect that when adults ask them questions, the adult already knows the answer (David et al., 2001). For this reason, children may perceive the adult researcher as the authority figure and try to give a good impression by giving the ‘correct’ answer. Unequal power relations can exist in relation to differences in age, status, competency and experience and it is acknowledged that reducing unequal power relations between the adult researcher and children is difficult and may not be possible to achieve (Einarsdottir, 2007). However, interviewing children in groups can help to empower children and to reduce any anxiety; children are ‘more powerful when they are together, and they are also more relaxed when with a friend than when alone with an adult’ (Einarsdottir, 2007: 200). As James et al. (1998) note, the power relationship between the adult researcher and the child subject in an interview becomes diffused in group interviews where children are supported by their peers. This shift in control results in children becoming ‘enthusiastic informants rather than reluctant subjects’ (James et al., 1998: 190). At the same time, problems can similarly occur in relation to power dynamics amongst children which require skilful facilitation by the researcher (Hennessy and Heary, 2005).

Focus groups were therefore used in this study in an attempt to empower children and minimise the power differential so that children had support from each other within a group setting. These discussions took place in the school setting, an environment familiar to the children, but in spaces away from the formal environment of their classroom, such as learning support rooms. Classroom dynamics based on the requirement for children to participate in schoolwork and give correct answers to a ‘knowing’ adult, were challenged by conducting group discussions away from the classroom. Attempts to challenge power disparities were similarly made by positioning myself as ‘unknowing’ – for example by explaining to children that it was they who understood how they had experienced the programme and not me, and that I was keen to learn this from them. To reduce problems that can occur in relation to power dynamics amongst children themselves, group rules for respectful communication were established at the start of the discussion and referred back to when necessary. Furthermore, friendship groups were used as the basis for discussions, where possible, to ensure a safe and trusted environment (Lombard, 2015). Teachers were asked to select children for each focus group from the names written on consent forms completed by children who agreed to participate in the focus groups. I considered that teachers were best placed to select the friendship groups as they were aware of which children got on well. However, there are also risks in relying on teachers to select pupils for

inclusion in research. For example, teachers may select children based on their backgrounds and abilities, considering that the more articulate or high achieving children would be more useful to the researcher or reflect more positively on the school. Teachers' knowledge of children's family backgrounds could influence decisions about whether children should be involved in discussions which they perceive would impact negatively on them. Disruptive children may not be put forward based on the assumption that the research context may invoke similar behaviour to that displayed by such children in the classroom. Although I was mindful of the potential for selection bias, asking teachers to select friendship groups meant that problems relating to power dynamics amongst the children themselves were potentially reduced.

The interview guide for the children's focus groups was designed to facilitate discussion about children's perceptions of the programme (see Appendix 15). Children were asked about what they had expected from the programme, how they thought the programme had helped them, whether they had used what they learnt and whether anything had surprised or confused them. Photographs had been taken during delivery of the programme and these were presented to children to aid their recall of various topics. They were also invited to reflect on their experience of the programme, their enjoyment of it and if there was anything they would change. The interview questions were semi-structured and children were encouraged to respond to each other's comments, so that groups were centred on 'discussion' rather than simply responding to (adult) questions.

Non-participant observation

Non-participant observation refers to a method of observation whereby the observer observes but does not participate in any group activities (Bryman, 2016). Non-participant observation was used in this study to generate data on responses to the programme, including responses of both children and teachers. The sequence and duration of topics, as they occurred during programme delivery, were also recorded in order to address the question of how closely programme delivery reflected the programme plan, and whether and which topics were omitted. The observations focussed on the following broad areas: what was delivered and how; the tone and nature of delivery; and the nature of engagement, reaction and responses (both verbal and non-verbal) of both children and teachers. As such, a flexible approach to recording observations was adopted and detailed

notes were taken during the programme delivery to record behaviours, comments, questions and interactions. This information was recorded using a semi-structured observation schedule (See Appendix 13). As a method of recording children's and adults' actions and behaviours, observation is considered a more accurate method than asking participants to recall their responses at a later time, for example during interviews. Yet, as observation relates to *behaviour* rather than *meaning* 'it can rarely provide reasons for observed patterns of behaviour' (Bryman, 2016: 280). However, using this method as part of a mixed methods approach enabled a more comprehensive understanding of children's and adults' responses and experiences of the programme.

Individual interviews

Individual semi-structured interviews were conducted with a range of adults including facilitators, teachers and parents¹² and these were conducted to elicit respondents' views and experiences of the programme (See Appendix 14, 16 and 17). The semi-structured interview refers to a context of interactional talk between the interviewer and the respondent (Holstein and Gubrium, 2004) in which the interviewer has a series of questions in the form of an interview guide, but is able to vary the sequence of questions, and can ask further questions in response to what are perceived to be significant replies (Bryman, 2016). In this sense, the semi-structured interview utilised for this study followed a general framework of themes and questions, whilst new ideas were explored in response to what the interviewee said when this was considered to be applicable. The interview questions in this study focussed on broadly similar themes including views of doing prevention work on domestic violence in primary schools, as well as views on the implementation, delivery (in the teacher and facilitator interviews) and impact of the programme. All the teacher interviews took place in the school setting, one week following the programme. The facilitator interviews took place shortly after the end of the programme and parent interviews mostly took place a number of weeks following the programme, at a time that was convenient to them. Both the facilitator and parent interviews took place either face-to-face in the school or by telephone.

¹² Parents is used throughout the thesis to include all those with parental responsibility including carers

Piloting the research tools

The piloting phase of the study was completed during August 2016 and included a group of eight children, including three girls and five boys, aged between nine and eleven years old. Once consent was given by their mothers, children were invited to take part in the pilot. All the children were known to me previously and I arranged to meet them in their own or my home at a pre-arranged time. The children were asked to complete the survey and to read and comment on the children's information sheet and debrief sheet: two of the children were also asked to comment on the children's focus group questions. The aim of the piloting phase was, first, to learn whether any of the materials were confusing, second, to observe how children completed the survey, and third, to ask their opinion about the language and phrasing used. It was also helpful to learn how long it took the children to complete the survey.

During these sessions, I asked five of the mothers to read and give feedback on the information sheet and consent letter for parents. I made notes of both the children's and mothers' comments as they occurred during these sessions and then asked specific questions at the end of the task. These questions focussed on the following themes:

- 1- Design: layout, spacing, colour
- 2- Wording: clarity of the instructions and questions
- 3- Interest: length of the survey; was their interest upheld?

Six minor changes were made to the survey as a result of the pilot phase (see Appendix 1). The two children who also considered the focus group questions commented that these were clearly worded and did not offer any suggestions about how they could be improved. However, after focus groups were completed in School A, the discussion schedule was pared down to make the schedule easier to utilise during subsequent focus group sessions.

The mothers of children who took part in the pilot phase offered useful feedback on the parent's consent letter and information sheet. For example, all of the mothers agreed that the proposed plan to 'opt out' of the research would be much easier for parents than 'opting in'. The rationale offered was that opting out would require less effort for parents than actively opting in, particularly as children frequently bring letters and information home from primary school that require parents' time and attention. Two mothers advised that in

their experience schools often use an 'opt out' method, for example to consent to children's participation in school trips, and therefore parents may already be familiar with this system.

Reflections on the research design process

The time frame for the development of the research tools for this study was limited, particularly as the research timetable as a whole was restricted by the parameters set out by the programme providers (see discussion in Chapter One). Although I was able to test the research tools with children in the pilot phase, in the absence of a prolonged time period, children did not participate in the research design and research tools were not taken back to various groups of children during development of the questions. Ideally, a children's advisory group would have been established to contribute more widely to the development of the various research tools. Models for such an approach are offered by Larkins' (2014) research, by Lombard's (2015) study and by Ellis's (2006) study of a school-based prevention programme. Ellis recruited a group of young researchers through an organisation already working with children. Although a number of children initially agreed to participate in the advisory group, Ellis reports that several children dropped out early on and a significant amount of time was required for research training and team building activities.

Nevertheless, the advisory group met eleven times over the period of fourteen months and it is reported that the remaining four children contributed meaningfully to the development of questionnaires. Although in Ellis' study the focus group questions were designed by the adult researcher, the children advised that focus groups were preferable over individual interviews to enable children to speak more openly among the peer group and feel less pressure to speak than they would in a one to one interview. However, the time constraints experienced did not allow for such an approach to be adopted in my study.

Children's participation in the research design, analysis and dissemination might have resulted in more nuanced findings, especially if I had been able to involve them in interpretation of the data. The implications of not pursuing this approach meant that the research process was largely controlled by the adult researcher and therefore may not have fully captured an authentic child's perspective. The difficulty for this study was that time was limited by adult gatekeepers (see section under '*Sampling*' below) and in contrast to this study where time constraints made difficulties in doing so, future studies could engage children more fully. However, through the cooperation of adults, including Tender staff and

school staff, I was able to access large numbers of children for this study to express their own views through participation in focus groups where they talked freely and at length.

Ethical framework

As this research included child participants, ethical issues were a significant concern for the study. As noted by James et al. (1998: 187), 'In considering the social status of children, ethical considerations are never far from the surface of the discussion and have a clear bearing on child research.' In all research, ethical considerations focus on two central issues: informed consent and protection of research participants, however these are particularly significant and problematic in researching children (Morrow and Richards, 1996). The potentially sensitive nature of the research topic also has a bearing on ethical questions, particularly in respect of those children who experience violence (Evang and Øverlien, 2015); although this research does not ask children about personal experiences, ethical considerations acknowledge the potential tensions between children's vulnerability, their agency and rights to participation.

Acquiring informed consent from children initially requires the consent of adult gatekeepers and when research is conducted with children in schools, gatekeepers can include a range of adults including parents, school teachers, head-teachers and school governors (Einarsdottir, 2007; Morrow and Richards, 1996). Discourses around children's competence to consent usually focus on the age of children concerned, with greater concern around the need for adult consent when young children are involved (Alderson and Morrow, 2011). The reasons for requiring parental consent relate to parents' rights to have a say in what happens to their children, first, in connection to parents' responsibilities to 'minors', and second, that 18 is the age of 'majority' for purposes other than research (Morrow and Richards, 1996). Morrow and Richards (1996) draw on the work of Tymchuk (1992) to describe the distinction between 'permission and assent' whereby 'the parent or guardian agrees to allow a minor ward to participate in a research project, and the child assents or agrees to be a subject in the research' (Morrow and Richards, 1996: 94).

The protection of children in the research relationship is a conceptualisation of childhood 'as a period of powerlessness and responsibility' (James et al., 1998: 187). Lansdown (1994) suggests that children may be put 'at risk', firstly due to their physical weakness and relative lack of social experience, but also through their marginalisation as 'social, political and

economic actors' (in Morrow and Richards, 1996: 187). As such, children are more vulnerable to unequal power relations in the research relationship. However, James et al. (1998) maintain that a greater ethical dilemma faced by adult researchers is their responsibility towards children generally, in relation to a child's disclosure of a risk of harm, as Morrow and Richard explain:

'If a child discloses that he or she is at risk of harm, then the assumption is that the researcher has a duty to pass this information on to a professional who can protect the child...Researchers need to recognise their moral obligations as adults to protect children at risk even when this may mean losing access to, or the trust of, the children concerned if they do intervene.' (1996: 97)

They further describe that in the event of a disclosure, confidentiality is compromised but in all other circumstances, children should be entitled to the same degree of confidentiality and privacy as adult participants.

Informed consent suggests that participants voluntarily agree to take part in the research and understand the nature of the study. Einarsdottir (2007) states that to facilitate their understanding children should be given enough information (both verbal and written) in language that is comprehensible for them. They should also understand that participation is voluntary and that they are free to withdraw at any point. As this study comprised different data collection phases, it was important that children were clear that their participation was voluntary for each stage: this was emphasised both at the start and at the end of my initial face-to-face meeting with children (see Appendix 2). As the teacher was to administer the consent form in my absence, this point was highlighted whilst the teacher was present, and therefore children were assured that teachers were also aware of this. Children's choice to withdraw was emphasised again in the written consent form which stated: *'If you decide to take part and then change your mind, that is perfectly ok. **You can change your mind at any time**, and in the written guidelines at the start of each survey: 'You can stop at any time even after you start it'.* Children were informed that their consent also encompassed their participation in the observations; only two children across the three schools did not consent to participate in the research and no observation notes were recorded for those children. Children participating in the focus groups were informed at the start of the session:

'If you don't want to answer any of my questions or if you decide you don't want to take part in the group discussion anymore that is fine, just let me know and you won't need to tell me why.'

After the data collection phase, children were given a debrief sheet outlining their right to withdraw their data:

If you decide you don't want the things you have told me to be used in my study, you can contact me by phone or email, or tell your teacher.

The application for ethical approval for this research emphasised commitment to the principles of informed consent, protection and ensuring privacy and confidentiality; subsequently ethical approval was received from the University of Central Lancashire Psychology and Social Work Ethics Committee in August 2016 before data collection began. However, ethical practice remained central to the research process throughout and it is acknowledged that ethical considerations, which are ongoing throughout the duration of a research study, cannot be fully determined or resolved before fieldwork begins. For example, Punch (2002: 323) states that although it is essential to recognise ethical issues such as informed consent, confidentiality and the unequal power relationships between adult research and child participant, 'reflexivity should be a central part of the research process with children, where researchers critically reflect not only on their role and assumptions, but also on the choice of methods and their application'. As such, a reflexive approach to the research process was undertaken throughout, and attempts were made to enable children's participation and to minimise the power disparities by using methods and techniques suitable to children's competencies. Adopting the ethical practices described below assured the children and the various 'gatekeepers', including parents and school staff, of my ethical commitment.

To obtain children's informed consent I visited each school before the programme to describe the study to children and staff and to ensure I was a familiar face to them (see following section for a more detailed account of these visits). During this visit, children received both verbal and written information (see Appendix 2 and 3) about the research and were given one week to consider if they wanted to take part in the evaluation. As noted above, children were asked for their consent at various stages of the data collection including written consent before data collection began (Appendix 4), and verbal consent at the start of the focus groups (Appendix 15). Children were reminded throughout that participation was voluntary and they could withdraw at any time. Children, parents and teachers were given written information (Appendix 3, 5 and 7) and were encouraged to contact me if they had any queries or concerns; a university mobile phone number and email

address was included on all the information sheets for children, schools and parents. Letters for parents (Appendix 6) were sent home via children and to ensure the letters were passed on to parents, I emphasised the importance of this to children during my initial visit: school staff also contacted parents by text message to inform them that a letter was being sent home. Parents were given the opportunity to opt their child out of the research before the children gave their consent to take part. Only two children, both from School B, decided not to participate in the research.

In relation to participant welfare, the topic of healthy relationships which implicitly explores domestic and sexual abuse could be considered a 'sensitive' topic and I was therefore alert to any cues of distress during the children's focus groups. The children were informed at the start of the group interviews that, in the event of a disclosure, relevant information would be passed to the school: this did not occur in any of the focus groups. Separate debrief information sheets for children and adults, which included information about the study, as well as where to go for help and support, were offered to all participants (Appendix 8 and 9).

Participants' rights to confidentiality were highlighted in the information sheets and verbalised before each of the interviews and focus groups commenced. Individual identities in the transcript data were anonymised, with all interviewees given a unique identifying code. Digital voice recordings were anonymised and all personal data including children's consent forms (Appendix 4) and survey data (Appendix 10, 11, 12), were stored securely in a locked cabinet. All participants were advised both in the written information sheets (Appendix 3, 5, 7) and at the start of the interviews (Appendix 14, 15, 16, 17) that any quotes used in the thesis and subsequent reports would not reveal a participant's identity. Additionally, in writing the thesis up, care has been taken to anonymise schools and children and pseudonyms are used where quotes are assigned to individual children.

Conducting the research

Reflexivity

Berger (2015) contends that researchers need to be aware of the role of the self in the creation of knowledge, and to monitor the impact of their biases, beliefs and personal experiences. This is based on the understanding that the background of the researcher affects the ways in which they construct meaning in the world, which in turn affects the ways information from participants is gathered, filtered, made meaning of and ultimately

shapes the findings and conclusions of a study (Kacen and Chaitin, 2006). Adopting a reflexive approach can enhance the quality of the research by maintaining an awareness of oneself as part of the setting under study. In the context of an adult doing research with children in the primary school setting, I was continually aware of the adult-child power dynamic in my relationship with children. Reflecting on my own experience of childhood, along with my beliefs about respecting children and my attitudes towards children's status and competence undoubtedly affected my approach to, and my understandings of, the children with whom I was researching. Whilst I shared with them the experience of once being a child, as well as a child who had experienced primary school, I was mindful that, as every childhood is different, I had no knowledge of their own experiences. Reflection, in this sense, assisted me in maintaining independence as an evaluator by avoiding mapping my own experiences onto theirs. Furthermore, while we may have shared the experience of the programme itself - through their participation and my observation – I had no knowledge of their individual experiences of the programme. It was anticipated that through my position as the 'ignorant' researcher and children as 'expert', children were respected, empowered and validated as competent and active participants in the co-construction of knowledge (James et al., 1998).

Sampling

The three schools included in this study were selected by Tender. During the summer of 2016, Tender faced some uncertainty around how the programme would continue to be funded and this meant that the lifespan of the programme was potentially limited. Because of this, schools who took up the programme and agreed to participate in the evaluation during the period from September 2016 were included in the evaluation. Consequently, rather than selecting a sample, schools were recruited on a rolling basis and those children participating in the programme, and who agreed to take part in the evaluation, formed the sample group. Fitting the study within the provider's timeframe meant that the sample of schools and children participating in the study was not representative of the general population (see 'Limitations of the research', below). This also resulted in data collection taking place over a relatively restricted period of time, with the result that opportunities for adjustment of the research methods in the light of experience was limited. However, one advantage of completing the data collection within a short time period was that other

influences, such as potential changes to the programme or other external factors, did not influence the context in which the programme was delivered or received.

Accessing the schools

Access to schools was organised by Tender who provided school staff with a brief information sheet outlining the evaluation before signing up to the programme. The aim was to recruit three schools to the evaluation and the programme was delivered in these schools in sequence between September and November 2016. Once Tender had recruited a school to the programme and evaluation, I contacted the school key contact person by email to outline the research and to request a meeting with the Year 6 teacher and children: arrangements were made for these initial meetings to take place one week before the project was due to be delivered.

There were a number of tensions that quickly surfaced during these meetings and these may reflect some of the wider underlying tensions involved in implementing domestic violence prevention work in schools and in primary schools in particular. For example, staff across all three schools lacked knowledge about the content of the programme prior to delivery; senior staff who initially liaised with Tender staff were not fully aware of the programme topics and in some cases, had not read written information Tender staff described sending to them. This caused some concern prior to the programme delivery with one senior staff describing topics as 'heavy' and 'unsuitable'. Staff in the Catholic faith school were particularly uneasy about the topic of 'sexual pressure' as teaching 'sex education' was not considered to be in accordance with the ethos of the school. Staff in this school were also sensitive to the views of some parents who they anticipated would have strong views about teaching sex education to their children. However, contrary to staff expectations, those parents did not contact the school to complain about the programme.

Class teachers were similarly ill prepared for the delivery of the programme; class teachers had not been consulted by senior staff about the decision to implement the programme and had not received any detailed information about the programme either verbally or in writing. Although all class teachers were accommodating, a clear lack of communication on this issue between the school management and the class teachers meant that some teachers were somewhat frustrated by this process (see '*Readiness of schools for programme implementation*' in Chapter Seven for further discussion).

How schools selected children for the programme

In each school, the programme was delivered to one class of up to 30 Year 6 children (age 10 to 11). Two schools comprised two classes per year group and these schools had to decide which group of children would receive the programme. In one of these schools, teachers selected children from both classes 'according to need' considering that the programme could be useful to children who were facing 'current and historical issues'. The implications of this decision could be that selected children may have been unwillingly exposed as children who experienced problems such as those addressed in the programme or alienated from those children who weren't selected. Children who weren't selected could have felt overlooked compared to those receiving the programme and children in this group might also have been experiencing difficulties unknown to staff. In the other school, one class was selected on the basis that their teacher was the school PSHE lead.

Meeting the children

The aim of the initial meeting was to introduce the research and myself to the children. This was an important part of the research process for two reasons: first, in order for the children to give their informed consent, they needed to become aware of the research; and second, by introducing myself beforehand, I aimed to become a familiar face to children when I returned to observe the programme the following week. It became apparent in each school that children hadn't been told about the programme until I was introduced to them by their teacher. The way I was introduced to the class generally went as follows:

We have a visitor because next week we're going to be doing a workshop all about healthy relationships and friendships and Nicola is doing some research about it, so she's going to tell you a bit more.

I anticipated that by introducing myself to the children the week before the programme facilitators arrived at their school, children would view me separately to the programme. However, as this was the first they knew of the programme, I wasn't sure that the children fully understood my position this way. After being introduced, I talked about the research and started by saying that I was a student, like them. In positioning myself as an adult

'learner' rather than a 'knowing' adult, I aimed to disassociate myself from the authoritative role of adult teachers within the school setting. I then told them:

"My research is to find out what you think about the healthy relationships workshop and what sorts of things you learn from it. You don't have to take part in my research and if you decide you don't want to that's absolutely fine."

My aim was to emphasise to children (and the teacher) that they were free to choose whether they took part and in doing so avoid any pressure to participate. As Einarsdottir (2007) points out, the power inequality between the adult researcher and the child means that children can find it difficult to say if they do not want to participate. This is compounded in the school setting where teachers' approval for participating and being cooperative and helpful to 'visitors' creates a hidden pressure on children to participate (David et al., 2001).

I explained what their participation would involve by showing them a copy of the survey, explaining that they would be invited to complete three surveys: before and after the programme and at six months follow up. I emphasised that the survey was not a test and there were no right or wrong answers. I explained that their responses were private, and they therefore shouldn't share their answers, and that they would be asked to put the completed survey in a sealed envelope (Appendix 10, 11, 12). It was important for me to explain this process, so the children were in no doubt about the confidential nature of the research, as well as understanding what to expect. I then explained that once the programme had finished they would be invited to take part in a small focus group to share their views of the programme, again emphasising that participation was voluntary. It was also important to highlight that, due to time restrictions, it wouldn't be possible for all the children to take part. I finished describing the research process by saying I would return the following week to observe the programme and requested their permission to spend time with them in the playground during break times. I emphasised again that they weren't being examined or tested, but that I was interested to see their responses to the programme.

I then presented the children's information leaflet (Appendix 3), as well as the parent's information leaflet and letter (Appendix 5 and 6) so children felt included in the process of informing their parents and gaining parents' consent. I emphasised the importance of taking these letters home so that their parents were aware children were being invited to participate in the research and could give their consent: across the three schools, only two parents of children who took part in the programme did not consent to their child taking

part in the evaluation. I ended by emphasising the voluntary nature of their participation and their anonymity (see Appendix 2).

By giving the children the choice to participate, as well as written and verbal information, their consent was as informed as possible, and meeting the children one week before the programme gave children enough time to decide whether to 'assent' (Dockett, 2009). I had invited children to interrupt with their questions as I spoke, asking them 'does that make sense?' and 'is that ok with you?' throughout. They appeared to listen carefully and asked questions including: 'Why is this school doing the workshop?', 'Why have you chosen us?' and 'What does Healthy Relationships mean?' I interpreted their questions to mean they were interested and wanted to know what they were doing and why they were doing it. However, as this was the first time the programme had been introduced to them, their questions mostly focussed on aspects of the programme rather than the research and this was problematic for their understanding of my role as the independent researcher at this stage. However, by meeting the children face-to-face, I had started to form a relationship with them and this important process of relationship building continued once I returned to the school.

Collecting the data

A total of 82 children took part in the Healthy Relationships programme across the three schools and of these, only two children (both girls) did not consent to take part in the evaluation. Therefore, a total of 80 children were included in the evaluation sample; 45 (56%) were girls and 35 (44%) were boys. The majority of the data collection was undertaken in parallel with the programme delivery.

Children's surveys

As outlined above, the children completed the paper surveys at three different time points; the day prior to the first programme session, the day after the end of the programme and at six months follow up (see Appendix 10, 11, 12). The surveys were administered in each school by the class teacher who had been briefed on the content of the survey and the procedure for completing it.

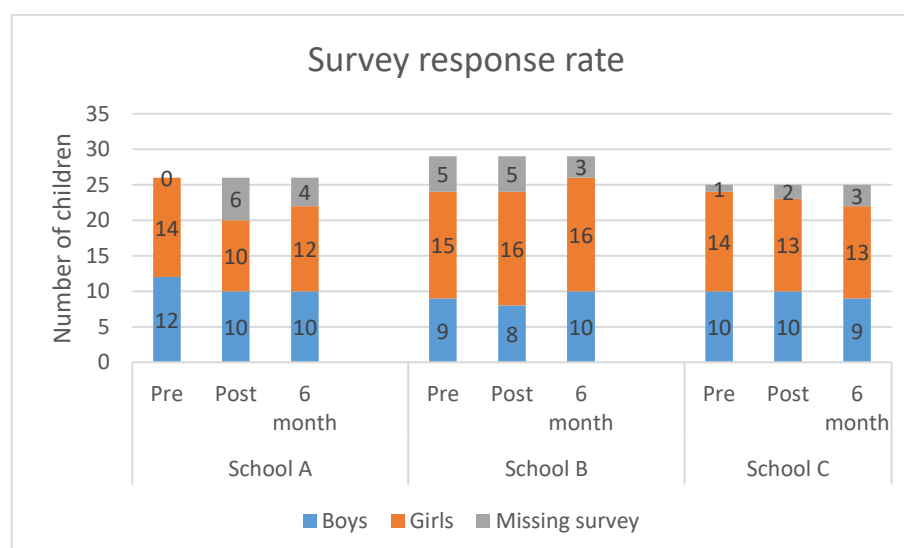
On the day each survey was administered, some children were either absent or had left the school and were unable to complete all three surveys, as discussed further below. Table 3.1 shows the number of children who completed Survey 1, 2 and 3 in each school.

Table 3.1 Number of children who completed the surveys

	Survey 1	Survey 2	Survey 3	Number of children in evaluation
School A	26	20	22	26
School B	24	24	26	29
School C	24	23	22	25
Total	74	67	70	80
Missing	6	13	10	
Total	80	80	80	

Of the 80 children who took part in the evaluation, 60 children (75%) completed Survey 1, 2 and 3; of these 36 (60%) were girls and 24 (40%) were boys. Nine children (11%) completed only one of the three surveys (3 girls, 6 boys) and eleven children (14%) completed two of the three surveys (6 girls, 5 boys). Figure 3.1 shows the number of surveys completed by boys and girls at each stage by school.

Figure 3.1 Survey response rate



The level of attrition varied across the sample in each school. For example, a large number of children in School A were absent (to celebrate the religious festival of Eid) the day Survey 1 was administered, and the teacher made time for these children to complete the survey

before the programme began. As shown in Figure 3.1 above, this resulted in a full sample in School A at baseline. Similarly, in School B, the teacher reported that some children had not completed Survey 1 the day it was administered and children were also given time to do so before the programme began. However, five out of the total sample of 29 children in School B did not complete the survey at baseline and this may have been due to a lack of time during class or because some children were absent from school. In School C, Survey 1 had been completed the day before the programme without any known obstacles and only one child out of a sample of 25 did not complete the survey at baseline. Although I was not made aware of any difficulties in the administration of Survey 2 or Survey 3, attrition rates were highest overall for these surveys: 13 out of 80 (16%) for Survey 2, and 10 out of 80 (13%) for Survey 3. This may reflect some of the difficulties of conducting surveys in schools where time is limited, as well as having to rely on class teachers to administer surveys when it is not their priority.

Observations

As outlined above, I observed delivery of the programme in each school, writing detailed notes about children's and adults' behaviours, comments, questions and interactions, in addition to what was delivered and when. The observation schedule (Appendix 13) proved to be a useful prompt to guide the range of observations that I recorded. As children were engaged in the programme activity, they did not seem to be distracted by me: only one girl showed an interest in what I was doing. I typed up my hand-written notes the day after the programme ended, expanding them and adding detail to ensure comprehensiveness. Observations were mainly used to inform the research in two ways. First, I was able to draw on my observations to query children's responses to the programme - as I had observed them - during children's focus group discussions; for example, asking why they had reacted a certain way to a task, such as laughing or withdrawing. As such, observations were used to prompt children's recollections of the programme rather than relying solely on them recalling their responses at a later date. Whilst, as noted above, observation relates to behaviour rather than meaning; it is also used to clarify the meaning of observed behaviour (Bryman, 2016). Second, the observations were used during data analysis to confirm and counter findings from other sources of data: for example, observations of children's questions and comments reinforced children's reflections during focus group discussions that the programme lacked detail around the consequences of seeking help. As such, using

observations as part of a mixed methods approach strengthened understandings of children's and adults' responses and experiences of the programme.

Children's focus groups

Seven focus groups were conducted with 29 participating children across the three schools, one week following programme delivery (see Table 3.2 below). The children were asked to indicate their interest in taking part in the group interviews by completing a short form attached to Survey 2 (see Appendix 11). In School A, only 11 out of 26 (42%) children volunteered to take part in the focus groups. As this was a relatively small number, all 11 children took part in two separate focus groups: six in Group 1 and five in Group 2. These were both mixed gender groups, a decision that was made to reflect the formation of the programme, as well as to elicit a range of views from boys and girls. However, these groups were difficult to manage at times which, on reflection, was due to the size of the groups: for example, on occasion, children would detach themselves from the group to form a separate conversation with a child sat next to them. To address this problem, subsequent groups were limited to three or four children (see below for how children in Schools B and C were selected). In Schools B and C, mixed and single sex groups were utilised to establish whether the gender dynamic had an effect on children's responses: children in single sex groups were better able to reflect on the role of gender in the classroom (i.e. boys' behaviour as 'silly' or 'annoying'; girls lacking discretion), whereas the gender dynamic was seen to be played out in mixed sex groups. Regardless of gender composition however, the smaller sized groups worked more effectively in that children were more able to engage and contribute to the discussions.

Table 3.2 Number of participants in children's focus groups

	School A		School B			School C		Total
	Group 1	Group 2	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 1	Group 2	
Girls	4	3	3	0	2	0	4	16
Boys	2	2	0	3	2	4	0	13
Total	6	5	3	3	4	4	4	29

The children's focus groups took place one week after the project - none of the teachers objected to the children taking time out of class to engage in these discussions. In Schools A and C, the teachers selected the children for each group from the names of children who

had agreed to participate. As noted above, I considered that teachers were best placed to select children's friendship groups as they were aware of which children got on well. However, it is also acknowledged that there are risks in relying on teachers to select pupils for inclusion in research, including the potential for bias, as outlined in the section 'Children's focus groups' above. On arrival at School B, I was informed by the teacher that the children's focus group forms had been mislaid. The teacher asked children to raise their hands to volunteer to take part and then invited me to select the children. This was not ideal and finding myself in this situation I explained that I would choose volunteers randomly in order to minimise the possibility of children feeling marginalised. This again reflects some of the difficulties of relying on teachers who are less likely to consider ethical issues such as these.

Although schools are environments for children, they are also spaces which are controlled by adults and it can be difficult to find 'child spaces' (as opposed to adult spaces that dominate society) to carry out data collection (Punch, 2002: 326). I addressed this by arranging more private spaces away from the children's usual classrooms and focus groups usually took place in rooms used for extra support lessons or staff meetings. Yet privacy was not always guaranteed, with staff occasionally entering and leaving rooms and on one occasion requesting that a child leave the group to receive an award in an assembly.

Children are used to schools being places where they have to try and please adults and give the correct answer. This, together with their fear of adult reactions to wrong answers, can compound the inequality of the power relationships in research (as discussed above). This can also have an effect on the reliability of children's responses, since they may exaggerate or lie in order to please the researcher (Punch, 2002). To address this, children were reminded at the start of the focus groups (see Appendix 15) that they weren't being tested and that there were no right or wrong answers, and I anticipated that by spending informal time with them during their breaks, children saw me as less of an authority figure compared to their teachers. I also aimed to keep my reactions neutral during the focus group discussions so that I didn't influence their responses. As outlined above, photographs had been taken during delivery of the programme and these were presented to the children to aid their recall of various parts of the programme once children had been given the opportunity to recall the programme without being prompted. Except for the initial issue of the size of groups, these focus groups were straightforward to manage, and most children contributed meaningfully to the discussions. A small proportion of children across all the groups (mixed and single sex) were less forthcoming, and those children were given gentle

encouragement to participate, for example '*Did you think that too?*'. However, quieter children were not encouraged to participate any more strongly than this, as I was careful to ensure that their participation, and the extent of their participation, was entirely voluntary.

Adult interviews

Semi structured interviews were completed with programme facilitators, parents and year 6 class teachers following the delivery of the programme in each school to explore individuals' views of the programme and its impact, as discussed below. Table 3.3 presents the number of adult interviews completed.

Table 3.3 Adult interviews

	School A	School B	School C	Total
Facilitators	2	2	2	6
Parents	1	0	3	4
Teachers	1	1	1	3
Total	4	3	6	13

Facilitator interviews

The project was delivered by two different facilitators in each of the three schools: one female facilitator and one male. All the facilitators agreed to be interviewed at the end of the two-day programme and six interviews were completed in total; three face-to-face in the school setting and three by telephone. All the interviews were voice recorded and transcribed and each interview lasted between 40 and 50 minutes. The length of these interviews reflected their considerable knowledge and understanding of the programme and what it was aiming to achieve. Despite being immersed in the programme, facilitators were able to critically reflect on the programme, and this indicated the validity and authenticity of their reflections. All the facilitators appeared to engage fully in the interview and some commented on the benefit of reflecting on the programme through this process.

Parent interviews

Engaging parents to take part in the interviews was the most challenging part of the data collection process as was anticipated during the planning of the research. Although I had invited parents to participate via the parents' letter and information sheet, I had no take-up from parents using this approach. My next step was to ask the teachers if they could assist by inviting parents to take part. However, as the programme took place at the beginning of the school year, two teachers informed me that they didn't know the parents well enough yet and furthermore that they had little contact with parents except during parents' evenings. I was also told that language would be a barrier, as many of the parents were either non-English speaking or spoke English as an additional language.

However, in School A, I was informed that a parent of one of the participating children worked at the school and they agreed to take part in an interview, once I approached them. In School C, I completed interviews with three parents, all of whom were mothers. Two of these mothers were recruited once I had approached them in the playground at the start of the school day and telephone interviews were arranged for the following week. The other mother was a school volunteer and we arranged to do the interview face-to-face when I returned to the school the following week. Therefore, four parent interviews were completed in total and these lasted between 10 and 15 minutes each. The limited number recruited to the study reflects the difficulty of engaging parents in school-based research which, in this study, may have been compounded by the large numbers of families of children who spoke English as a second language. Although the four participating parents were aware that their children had taken part in the programme, they had very little knowledge of the programme content. On the one hand this implies that children were not talking about the programme at home, but also that parents were not included in their children's learning on these topics, either by Tender or by schools (see section '*Engaging with parents*' in Chapter Seven for implications of excluding parents). Although parents saw the value in this work, the limited number of parents included in this study means that it cannot be assumed their views would be shared by other parents.

Teacher interviews

All three of the year 6 class teachers agreed to take part in an interview and these took place in the classroom the week following the programme. All the interviews were voice

recorded, each lasting between 30 and 40 minutes. As primary school teachers have limited free time during the school day, two interviews took place during the lunch break. The other took place during an after-school homework club, where children frequently became noisy due to a lack of attention from their teacher. As I was present throughout the duration of the programme, I became familiar to the teachers and teachers understood my independence from the programme, for example by referring in conversation to '*Nicola's research*' and affiliating me with a university as opposed to affiliating me with Tender. It may be for these reasons that teachers spoke openly during the interviews, critically reflecting on their experiences of the programme and their perceptions of the children's experiences. Two teachers spoke of the value of the interview commenting that they had given them the opportunity to fully reflect on the programme, which they might not otherwise have done.

Approach to data analysis

Quantitative data

Children's individual surveys across the three time points were matched using children's names. Responses to the open-ended questions were inputted into an Excel spreadsheet and answers to the 12 closed questions were entered into SPSS. Missing data were coded to distinguish between different types of missing data (see Chapter Four for further discussion). Frequency tables were produced for the responses to each question to determine the frequency and percentage of children who agreed, were not sure or disagreed with each statement. Crosstabulations were also produced for each statement to identify differences in responses between boys and girls and between schools. Differences between the survey scores were calculated and the statistical significance examined by conducting Friedman's ANOVA (analysis of variance) for each measure. Friedman's ANOVA is a non-parametric¹³ test used for assessing differences between conditions (i.e. at different time points) when there are more than two conditions and the same participants have been used (Field, 2009). Differences between scores for boys and girls were also examined.

¹³ Non-parametric tests are used when data is ranked and therefore not normally distributed and analysis is carried out on the ranks rather than actual data i.e. data was ranked as: 1 Agree a lot, 2 Agree a bit, 3 Not sure, 4 Disagree a bit, 5 Disagree a lot

Where the significance level from Friedman's ANOVA was below 0.05, a post hoc Wilcoxon test was conducted to follow up the finding. A Wilcoxon test is used as a follow up to test for differences between two sets of scores from the same participants but a correction is made for the number of tests that are carried out (the Bonferroni correction) whereby the significance level is $0.05/\text{number of comparisons}$ (Field, 2009). Where results from the Friedman test were significant, three comparative tests were carried out on the measure using Wilcoxon's signed-rank test: 1. Survey 1 and Survey 2; 2. Survey 1 and Survey 3; 3. Survey 2 and Survey 3. Therefore, the adjusted significance level for results using the Wilcoxon test was $0.05/3 = 0.0167$.

Qualitative data

All interview and focus group data were transcribed and anonymised, and transcripts and observation notes were managed using NVivo data analysis software. Data were then analysed using a thematic analysis framework. Thematic analysis was selected as an accessible and flexible method for qualitative research (Braun and Clarke, 2006) which allows for the generation of new themes through a process of inductive coding, as well as through a process of deductive coding where themes identified in the data relate to existing literature. Focus group interviews were analysed separately from individual interviews and observation notes, to assist with the management of the data. Analysis began with an initial process of coding; labels were allocated to sections of data which appeared significant and related to the research questions. The number of codes were then condensed into overarching concepts which reflected the underpinning codes and themes (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Bryman, 2016). Connections and variations between the concepts and cases, such as between girls and boys and across schools, were identified and described (Bazeley, 2013). Gender roles and norms were considered throughout the analysis.

Reflections on the research process and setting

Owing largely to both careful preparation and cooperation of all those involved, including Tender staff, school staff, children and parents, the data collection phase of this study was mostly unproblematic. As noted above, one potential drawback of doing research in schools is having to rely on teachers and this may be the compromise involved in doing research in

schools where research is not a priority. Nevertheless, all the teachers in this study were highly supportive despite other demands such as workload and time restrictions. Throughout this process, I have become increasingly mindful of the dynamics which can occur within primary schools, for example, in relation to the extent of staff connectedness and readiness for programmes: school staff may not always communicate effectively with each other and this may have a bearing on teachers' perceptions of how they are valued within the school – in this study, none of the class teachers were aware that senior staff had arranged for the programme to be delivered to their class and this caused some degree of frustration among teachers (see section '*Readiness of schools for programme implementation*' in Chapter Seven). In addition, in the process of doing research in this setting, I have become more familiar with the perceived complexities faced by primary schools around teaching children about issues considered to be sensitive or inappropriate for young children. This is particularly relevant for staff in schools who may feel restricted by their perceptions of how parents might react to programmes that address sensitive topics with their children (see '*Programme content*' in Chapter Seven).

Limitations

This is a small-scale study, based on a limited number and sample of schools. As the programme is targeted at just one year group, in one part of England, and comprises a small number of children, findings cannot be generalised to the overall population of primary school children. As the research was conducted within a restricted time frame, evidence to support the longer term outcomes of the programme is limited. Furthermore, the findings from this research provides evidence in respect of one domestic violence prevention programme, and although it has features in common with other such preventive programmes, results are specific to this programme only.

Methodology Chapter Summary

- The mixed methods approach chosen for this study reflects both the aims of the research and the theoretical framework: feminist theories of violence as a consequence of socially constructed gender inequality, and theories of childhood which position children as active agents in the construction of knowledge, make a qualitative approach appropriate; developmental theories of learning suggest the value of measuring changes in knowledge through both quantitative and qualitative methods.
- The study is based exclusively on Tender's Healthy Relationships project for primary schools whose origins in theatre and education have influenced its approach to prevention work with children and whose aim is to promote children's positive attitudes and skills in order to develop healthy relationships in their current and future lives.
- The evaluation included three London primary schools where the programme was delivered sequentially over two consecutive days in each school between September and November 2016. The research design included a pre/post and 6 month survey for children to test for changes in knowledge along with children's focus groups to explore experiences of the programme, and observations of programme delivery. Adult perceptions of the programme were acquired through semi structured interviews including teachers, programme facilitators and parents.
- SPSS software was used to manage data and analysis was conducted using crosstabulations and frequency tables to identify gender and school-based differences; differences between individual's survey scores were examined using Friedman's ANOVA and Wilcoxon tests. Qualitative data were managed and analysed using NVivo data analysis software and a thematic analysis approach.
- The potentially sensitive nature of the programme topic and the inclusion of child participants meant that ethical concerns were central to the study. A reflexive approach ensured that ethical considerations such as potential tensions between children's vulnerability, their agency and rights to participation, as well as critical awareness of my own understanding and construction of childhood, were

fundamental to the research process. This process required reflection on the challenges presented by children's social role and how adults perceive it. This is particularly relevant to the ways that adult-child power relations in the school setting may impact on children and their perceptions of the adult researcher. By drawing on feminist theory to recognise and challenge the imbalance of power in the research relationship and childhood theory in which children are understood as competent social actors whose voices are heard, power dynamics in the research context can be recognised and understood.

CHAPTER FOUR: WHAT DO CHILDREN LEARN? SURVEY FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter presents findings from the children's self-administered surveys. Surveys completed across the three time points (i.e. one week prior to programme delivery, the week following delivery and at six months) are referred to throughout this chapter as Survey 1, Survey 2 and Survey 3. The chapter begins with a description of the number and types of missing survey data, followed by a description of the attributes of children participating in the survey. Findings from the survey are then explored under six main headings: gender equality; communication and managing conflict; peer pressure and bullying; staying safe from sexual abuse; help seeking; and supporting peers. Responses to questions relating to children's satisfaction with the programme are considered towards the end of the chapter.

Missing data

Missing data were coded to distinguish between the following types of missing data: 'missing survey' where a participant did not complete a whole survey i.e. they completed Survey 1 and Survey 2 but not Survey 3; 'incorrect answer' where a participant gave an incorrect answer, i.e. multiple responses to a single response category or answered 'No' but then incorrectly completed the follow up question; and 'missing answer' where a participant did not answer a question but had answered other questions within a single survey.

Table 4.1 Missing data

		School A	School B	School C	Total Missing (n=)	Total Missing (%)
Missing Survey	Survey 1	0	5	1	6/80	8%
	Survey 2	6	5	2	13/80	16%
	Survey 3	4	3	3	10/80	13%
Incorrect answer	Survey 1	0	0	1	1/1110	0.1%
	Survey 2	1	2	1	4/1206	0.3%
	Survey 3	2	1	0	3/1330	0.2%
Missing answer	Survey 1	5	5	0	10/1110	1%
	Survey 2	4	50	18	72/1206	6%
	Survey 3	2	29	8	39/1330	3%

The most common category of missing data across all the surveys was ‘missing survey’, i.e. the child was not in school at the time that the survey was completed or the child was present but failed to complete the survey. As Table 4.1 shows, six surveys were missing from the Survey 1 sample, 13 were missing from Survey 2 and 10 were missing from Survey 3 (see discussion in Chapter Three). The high response rate across each stage, means that the risk of bias in the achieved sample is low.

The second most frequent missing category was ‘missing answer’ where a participant did not answer an individual question within a survey. Missing answers may indicate that children found a statement confusing, could not decide how to answer or made a purposeful decision not to answer. Alternatively, respondents may have missed a question accidentally or run out of time. However, as the proportion of ‘missing answers’ for both the open and closed questions was low across each stage (Survey 1: 1%; Survey 2: 6%; Survey 3: 3%), it could be inferred that in the main, children were able to interpret the questions as intended and were willing to complete the questions at each stage of the data collection.

The least common missing category was ‘incorrect answer’, i.e. the child gave a multiple response to a single response category or answered ‘No’ but then incorrectly completed the follow up question. None of the open questions or the evaluation questions in Survey 2 and Survey 3 were coded as incorrect answer. Only eight responses to the closed questions were coded as ‘incorrect answer’ across all three stages and in each case this code was assigned because respondents had given two answers to a single response category. The low proportion of responses coded as ‘incorrect answer’ suggests that overall, children were able to follow the guidelines for completing the survey and that both the questions and statements were clear to them.

Cases with missing values for individual variables were excluded from analysis on a pairwise basis i.e. data were excluded from calculations only on the variable where a score was missing, therefore allowing the inclusion of cases on other variables with no missing values (Field, 2009). As the proportion of missing data across all survey questions was low, findings were not significantly affected.

Children’s attributes

The first sections of Surveys 1 and 2 asked for information on the children’s sex and age and whether they had a disability or learning difficulty. As anticipated, the children were able to

provide answers for their sex and age without difficulty and all the children in the sample provided this information; 45 (56%) were girls and 35 (44%) were boys. The majority of children (n=69, 86%) were aged 10 at the time they completed Survey 1 and 11 children (14%) were aged 11. Asking children whether they had a disability or learning difficulty was initially considered to be more problematic as I was aware from the pilot stage (see discussion in Chapter Three) that children were not always formally diagnosed with a learning difficulty at this age, and that some children may not be familiar with the concept. However, only five of the sample of 80 children did not answer this question, and this information was not available for one child who only completed Survey 3 where this question was not included. The remaining 74 children responded to this question, the majority of whom (n=69) answered 'No'¹⁴. Only five children identified themselves as having a disability or learning difficulty and of these children, three specified having Dyslexia, one child specified a learning difficulty and one child specified a physical impairment. Due to the lack of variation within the sample in relation to age and disability, these attributes were not factored into the main analysis to determine differences in children's scores.

Children's learning

Core messages were reinforced across a range of topics and activities throughout the two-day programme and for the purposes of analysis these are explored under the following headings: Gender equality; Communication and managing conflict; Peer pressure and bullying; Staying safe from sexual abuse; Help seeking; and Supporting peers. As outlined in Chapter Three, children were informed before they completed the survey that there were no right or wrong answers, so that rather than testing children's ability to recall key messages, survey responses reflected the extent to which children were able to accept concepts addressed both before and after the programme. However, in order to determine impact more broadly, prevention programmes commonly specify a number of key objectives and measuring children's attitudes against these can determine the extent to which a range of desired outcomes are achieved. As such, terms used throughout the chapter such as 'anticipated', 'desirable' and 'favourable' have been adopted to reflect the extent to which children's attitudes reflect the programme's intended objectives. There are ongoing debates as to which programme outcomes should be selected for measurement and whose interests

¹⁴ It is acknowledged that as children this young are not usually diagnosed with a learning disability, some children may not be aware of any diagnosis or label

and aims they reflect (Howarth et al., 2015). Due to time and access limitations, it was not possible to involve children in selecting outcomes for measurement (see Chapter Three for a fuller account of these limitations) however, the survey was piloted with children and the wording used in the surveys appeared to be acceptable to those children consulted during the pilot.

Gender equality

The topic of gender equality and equality within relationships is explicitly addressed through a range of activities and is implicitly covered throughout the programme, for example, through the relationship modelled by the male and female facilitators as identified in previous studies (Sanders-McDonagh et al., 2015). Children's attitudes towards this topic were explored in the surveys through the following two statements:

- a. If a girl has a boyfriend, she shouldn't spend lots of time with her own friends
- b. Mums and Dads should both be able to have a job if they want to

Both these statements were designed to reflect topics and scenarios specific to the programme (see Chapter Three). The first statement measures attitudes to both equality within relationships and early warning signs of an unhealthy relationship, both primary aims of the programme. The 'desirable' answer to the first statement was to disagree and at Survey 1, 62% (n=46/74) of the sample disagreed; 65% (n=20/31) of the boys and 61% (n=26/43) of the girls. A small proportion of children were unsure; 10% (n=3/31) of the boys and 16% (n=7/43) of the girls. At Survey 2, the proportion of boys who disagreed had fallen unfavourably to 50% (n=14/28) but had remained similar among the girls at 63% (n=24/38). A comparable number of boys were unsure at 11% (n=3/28) but this had increased slightly amongst the girls to 24% (n=9/38); among those who were unsure at Survey 1, only two girls remained unsure by Survey 2. However, at Survey 3, attitudes amongst both the boys and girls were more 'desirable' with 79% (n=23/29) of the boys and 85% (n=35/41) of the girls disagreeing with the statement.

Of the seventeen girls who were unsure or answered 'undesirably' at Survey 1, only five had shifted in a positive direction by Survey 2; twelve remained negative, did not answer or were unsure. Of the eleven boys who were unsure or answered 'undesirably' at Survey 1, four shifted in a 'favourable' direction at Survey 2, seven remained negative, did not answer or

were unsure. This complex picture may be an indication that some children found this statement confusing. As suggested in previous studies (Burman, 2016; Renold, 2005; Robinson 2012; Tsaliki, 2015), children's own experiences of sexuality as encompassed by intimacy, relationships, emotions and desires are central to their lives and the development of their own sense of identity. As such, whilst some children aged 10 -11 may be experiencing their own intimate relationships or starting to think about them, other children may not be at this stage. The concept of being in a relationship and foregoing friendships may not be meaningful to children in their current lives, particularly in the school context where friendships and socialisation are central to school life, and programmes may need to consider providing other examples of controlling behaviours which are more applicable to children's lived experiences.

Changes in children's attitudes on this statement overall, were not statistically significant at Survey 2 or Survey 3, $\chi^2 (2) = 5.358, p > 0.05$. However, further analysis to determine any differences between boys and girls showed that changes amongst the girls were statistically significant, $\chi^2 (2) = 8.643, p < 0.05$. Wilcoxon tests were used to follow up this finding and a Bonferroni correction applied so all effects are reported at a 0.0167 level of significance. Changes among the girls were not significant between Survey 1 and Survey 2, $T = 39, p > 0.0167, r = -0.17$, however attitude changes were statistically significant for girls from Survey 1 to Survey 3, $T = 41, p < 0.0167, r = -0.31$. This suggests that although the programme did not have had an immediate positive effect on children's attitudes on this measure, girls' attitudes may have developed more positively over time in line with their development and understanding. Differences in scores between schools were not significant.

Table 4.2 If a girl has a boyfriend she shouldn't spend lots of time with her own friends

			Sex		Total
			1 Girl	2 Boy	
Survey 1	1 Agree	Count	10	8	18
		% within Sex	23.3%	25.8%	24.3%
	2 Disagree	Count	26	20	46
		% within Sex	60.5%	64.5%	62.2%
	3 Not sure	Count	7	3	10
		% within Sex	16.3%	9.7%	13.5%
Total		Count	43	31	74
		% within Sex	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Survey 2	1 Agree	Count	5	11	16
		% within Sex	13.2%	39.3%	24.2%
	2 Disagree	Count	24	14	38
		% within Sex	63.2%	50.0%	57.6%
	3 Not sure	Count	9	3	12
		% within Sex	23.7%	10.7%	18.2%
Total		Count	38	28	66
		% within Sex	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Survey 3	1 Agree	Count	3	4	7
		% within Sex	7.3%	13.8%	10.0%
	2 Disagree	Count	35	23	58
		% within Sex	85.4%	79.3%	82.9%
	3 Not sure	Count	3	2	5
		% within Sex	7.3%	6.9%	7.1%
Total		Count	41	29	70
		% within Sex	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

The second statement, *'Mums and Dads should both be able to have a job if they want to'* measures children's attitudes towards gender equality and equality within relationships and relates to a specific activity within the programme where children discuss job roles and gender stereotypes. The 'anticipated' answer was to agree and, at Survey 1, a high proportion of children agreed with this statement: 81% (n=25/31) of the boys and 88% (n=38/43) of the girls. This proportion remained high at Survey 2 with 89% (n=25/28) of the boys and 84% (n=31/37) of the girls in agreement. At Survey 3, 90% (n=26/29) of the boys and 95% (n=38/40) of the girls agreed. The proportion of children who were unsure remained low at each stage; 10% (n=3/31) of the boys and 5% (n=2/43) of the girls at Survey 1; 7% (n=1/28) of the boys and 8% (n=3/37) of the girls at Survey 2 and 3% (n=1/29) of the boys and 3% (n=1/40) girls at Survey 3; these were not the same children except for one boy who remained unsure before and after the programme. Only two children presented negative attitudes that did not shift on this measure (one boy, one girl) and both presented positive attitudes on the previous measure of gender equality.

Changes in children's attitudes on this measure were not statistically significant at Survey 2 or Survey 3, $\chi^2(2) = 0.444$, $p > 0.05$. Differences between girls and boys, and differences within schools were also not significant. It should be noted that as this statement is relatively undisputable, it may be that children's answers are based on socially desirable attitudes towards paid work. The inclusion of more debatable measures on gender stereotypes may have revealed some wider differences in attitudes, for example children's attitudes on the previous measure of equality within relationships were somewhat more varied. However, some differences in children's attitudes towards equality in relationships were explored through the vignette questions described below.

Table 4.3 Mums and Dads should both be able to have a job if they want to

			Sex		Total
			1 Girl	2 Boy	
Survey 1	1 Agree	Count	38	25	63
		% within Sex	88.4%	80.6%	85.1%
	2 Disagree	Count	3	3	6
		% within Sex	7.0%	9.7%	8.1%
	3 Not sure	Count	2	3	5
		% within Sex	4.7%	9.7%	6.8%
Total		Count	43	31	74
		% within Sex	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Survey 2	1 Agree	Count	31	25	56
		% within Sex	83.8%	89.3%	86.2%
	2 Disagree	Count	3	2	5
		% within Sex	8.1%	7.1%	7.7%
	3 Not sure	Count	3	1	4
		% within Sex	8.1%	3.6%	6.2%
Total		Count	37	28	65
		% within Sex	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Survey 3	1 Agree	Count	38	26	64
		% within Sex	95.0%	89.7%	92.8%
	2 Disagree	Count	1	2	3
		% within Sex	2.5%	6.9%	4.3%
	3 Not sure	Count	1	1	2
		% within Sex	2.5%	3.4%	2.9%
Total		Count	40	29	69
		% within Sex	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

An open-ended vignette question was included in the survey to further elicit children's attitudes towards equality within relationships and early warning signs of unhealthy relationships (see discussion in Chapter Three):

Emily and James have been girlfriend and boyfriend for two months. Emily's favourite outfit is her red dress. One day James asked Emily not to wear it anymore because he said it makes her look stupid.

This vignette is based on part of a scenario on early warning signs of unhealthy relationships, which was enacted by the children during the programme. Two open questions followed the vignette:

Q1. What do you think Emily should do?

Q2. Why do you think she should do that?

Most children entered the programme with 'favourable' attitudes towards this scenario, with 90% of the sample recognising Emily's autonomy and James' 'undesirable' behaviour (90% of the boys, 91% of girls). Many children suggested that Emily should not modify her behaviour and resist James' request by continuing to wear her dress, for example *'She can wear it, her boyfriend is not allowed to tell what she has to do'* (Boy, School A). Around a quarter of the children who responded to this vignette believed that Emily's 'right' to wear what she chooses was more important than her relationship with James and suggested that Emily should end her relationship with him; *'Emily should dump him, because it's her right to wear the dress and she has a voice to say no I'm not taking it off'* (Girl, School B). However, around 10% of the children (3 boys, 4 girls) stated that Emily should be compliant, for example *'Do what he said, because they're girlfriend and boyfriend'* (Girl, School A) and one boy seemed to anticipate a risky response from James, advising Emily to *'Wear a different dress, to be safe'* (Boy, School A).

At Survey 2, a similar proportion of children demonstrated positive attitudes towards equality and agency within relationships with 87% of the sample stating that Emily should continue to wear the dress (85% of boys, 89% of girls). However, 13% of the sample (3 boys, 4 girls) demonstrated less 'favourable' attitudes towards gender equality at Survey 2, commenting that Emily should modify her behaviour and stop wearing the dress; three of these children (2 girls, 1 boy) held similar attitudes at Survey 1 and four children revealed

less 'favourable' attitudes at Survey 2 (2 girls, 2 boys). These children perceived Emily's relationship with James as more significant than her autonomy, shown through such statements as *'If Emily wants to keep her relationship she should listen to James'* (Girl, School B) and *'Listen and stop wearing it because he will dump you'* (Boy, School C).

However, by Survey 3, perceptions among all seven of these children had shifted in a positive direction, suggesting that those children who had entered the programme with negative attitudes on this measure had initially been resistant to messages around equality within relationships and early warning signs of unhealthy relationships, and additionally, that some confusion had occurred among those four children whose positive attitudes at the start had declined after the programme. It is worth noting that these seven children had demonstrated positive attitudes on the two measures of equality and early warning signs discussed above, both at Survey 1 and Survey 2, except for one boy who demonstrated a less 'favourable' attitude towards girlfriends spending time with their own friends both at Survey 2 and Survey 3. As such, the vignette appears to have drawn out some subtle differences in attitudes towards gender equality that would not have been perceived through the use of the closed questions alone. Furthermore, although the majority of children positioned themselves as equal within a girlfriend and boyfriend relationship, a very small proportion of girls (5%) indicated that they expected this status to change once a couple are married, shown through comments such as, *'Because they're not married yet and when they get married he might tell her to wear it or not'* (Girl, School C) and *'Because they're not married yet so he has no right to do that'* (Girl, School C). This suggests that these girls were not clear that equality and autonomy should exist across all types of relationships regardless of their status or point in time pointing to the need for these types of messages to be repeated as children progress through their school years and when the prospect of marriage becomes more relevant.

Communication and managing conflict

Identifying the early warning signs of an unhealthy relationship is a theme which is reinforced throughout the programme with the intention that children should learn to identify unhealthy behaviours and strategies to resolve conflict safely. This topic was explored through a single statement:

- c. Shouting is the only way to sort out an argument

This statement was adapted from a statement used in Ellis' (2006) study '*Fighting is the only way to sort out an argument*' which was used to measure children's understanding of managing conflict. During the programme, shouting as a form of physical violence is demonstrated by the facilitators. This is followed by a further demonstration of strategies to de-escalate an argument and children are then invited to rehearse this scenario themselves. The 'desired' response was to disagree and at Survey 1, a high proportion of children disagreed with this statement; 84% (n=26/31) boys and 81% (n=35/43) girls, with four girls and one boy stating they were not sure. By Survey 2, the proportion of girls who disagreed was similar to those in Survey 1 at 87% (n=33/38) and the proportion of boys who disagreed decreased undesirably to 75% (n=21/28), with the proportion who agreed rising slightly. The number of girls who were unsure at Survey 2 had decreased to nil and only one boy was unsure; this boy had 'agreed a lot' before the programme, indicating a shift in the 'right' direction. These findings suggest that the programme message about resolving conflict in non-aggressive ways may have been misunderstood by a small number of children; five children who responded positively at Survey 1 gave negative responses at Survey 2 (three girls and two boys), and five children who had responded negatively or were unsure at Survey 1 continued to respond negatively by Survey 2; three girls and two boys.

Comparable findings were reported by Ellis' (2006) where, prior to programme delivery, the majority of children thought that conflict was not the only way to sort out an argument. However, although Ellis reported an increase in both boys' and girls' attitudes in a positive direction after the programme, similar to the current study, there was a greater increase in the total number of girls who believed that conflict was not the only way to sort out an argument compared to the boys. This may suggest that boys see conflict as more appropriate than girls (Ellis, 2006), and supports feminist accounts of the gendered identities associated with being boys (Renold, 2005).

By Survey 3, the proportion of children who disagreed that shouting is the only way to sort out an argument was more 'favourable'; 97% (n=28/29) of the boys and 90% (n=37/41) of the girls, lending support to the suggestion above that perhaps the method adopted by the programme to raise this topic (an enactment of two people shouting) was confusing for some children. Changes in children's attitudes on this measure were not statistically significant.

Table 4.4 Shouting is the only way to sort out an argument

			Sex		Total
			1 Girl	2 Boy	
Survey 1	1 Agree	Count	4	4	8
		% within Sex	9.3%	12.9%	10.8%
	2 Disagree	Count	35	26	61
		% within Sex	81.4%	83.9%	82.4%
	3 Not sure	Count	4	1	5
		% within Sex	9.3%	3.2%	6.8%
Total		Count	43	31	74
		% within Sex	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Survey 2	1 Agree	Count	5	6	11
		% within Sex	13.2%	21.4%	16.7%
	2 Disagree	Count	33	21	54
		% within Sex	86.8%	75.0%	81.8%
	3 Not sure	Count	0	1	1
		% within Sex	0.0%	3.6%	1.5%
Total		Count	38	28	66
		% within Sex	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Survey 3	1 Agree	Count	1	0	1
		% within Sex	2.4%	0.0%	1.4%
	2 Disagree	Count	37	28	65
		% within Sex	90.2%	96.6%	92.9%
	3 Not sure	Count	3	1	4
		% within Sex	7.3%	3.4%	5.7%
Total		Count	41	29	70
		% within Sex	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Peer pressure and sexual bullying

The overall aim of the programme is to promote healthy relationships, and to facilitate this objective topics focussing on healthy and unhealthy friendships and various forms of bullying including sexual bullying and peer pressure are addressed through a range of activities with the aim that children should learn to identify forms of peer abuse and various courses of action to support them. Children's understanding of these issues was measured through the following two statements:

d. If someone is bullying me, I should keep quiet about it

h. If a friend asks you to do something, you always have to do it

The first statement, *'If someone is bullying me, I should keep quiet about it'* measures children's attitudes towards self-protective behaviours and avenues of support. The 'expected' response to this statement would be to disagree and the majority of children disagreed at Survey 1; 83% (n=25/30) of the boys, 91% (n=39/43) of the girls. Only two boys and one girl were unsure before the programme. By Survey 2, the proportions of those who disagreed remained high with 89% (n=25/28) of the boys and 90% (n=34/38) of the girls in disagreement. None of the boys and only two girls were unsure at Survey 2; one girl had also been unsure at Survey 1 and the other had previously agreed. These proportions were similar at Survey 3. Only one boy consistently agreed at each stage that he should keep quiet if he was being bullied.

As children's attitudes on this measure were mostly positive at each time point, it is unsurprising that changes in children's attitudes on this measure were not statistically significant. The high rate of positive responses at the start may be indicative of the anti-bullying work which is well established in schools (see Chapter Two) and the programme may have reinforced existing 'desirable' attitudes. However, this statement is relatively incontestable and the inclusion of other statements to explore this concept further may have revealed more subtle differences in attitudes which is not possible when using a single question.

Table 4.5 If someone is bullying me I should keep quiet about it

			Sex		Total
			1 Girl	2 Boy	
Survey 1	1 Agree	Count	3	3	6
		% within Sex	7.0%	10.0%	8.2%
	2 Disagree	Count	39	25	64
		% within Sex	90.7%	83.3%	87.7%
	3 Not sure	Count	1	2	3
		% within Sex	2.3%	6.7%	4.1%
Total		Count	43	30	73
		% within Sex	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Survey 2	1 Agree	Count	2	3	5
		% within Sex	5.3%	10.7%	7.6%
	2 Disagree	Count	34	25	59
		% within Sex	89.5%	89.3%	89.4%
	3 Not sure	Count	2	0	2
		% within Sex	5.3%	0.0%	3.0%
Total		Count	38	28	66
		% within Sex	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Survey 3	1 Agree	Count	1	1	2
		% within Sex	2.4%	3.4%	2.9%
	2 Disagree	Count	39	26	65
		% within Sex	95.1%	89.7%	92.9%
	3 Not sure	Count	1	2	3
		% within Sex	2.4%	6.9%	4.3%
Total		Count	41	29	70
		% within Sex	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

The 'anticipated' response to the second statement, *'If a friend asks you to do something you always have to do it'* would be to disagree and responses to this statement were not dissimilar to those of the previous statement on bullying. Amongst the boys, 78% (n=24/31) disagreed and of the girls 86% (n=37/43) disagreed at Survey 1, with 16% (n=5/31) of the boys and 5% (n=2/43) of the girls answering 'not sure'. By Survey 2, numbers were similar with 83% (n=19/23) of the boys and 84% (n=31/37) of the girls disagreeing with the statement. Three boys and three girls answered 'not sure'; two of these boys and two of the girls had also been unsure before the programme.

Friedman's test of changes in repeated measures showed that changes in attitudes were statistically significant $\chi^2(2) = 8.377, p < 0.05$ and follow up analysis using a Wilcoxon signed rank test showed that changes amongst the girls were significant between Survey 1 and Survey 3, $T = 45, p < 0.0167, r = -0.29$. Although a high proportion of children said they disagreed with the statement, the concept of what makes a good friend is complex and for some children the distinction between being an accommodating friend and always doing as they are told may be unclear. For example, by Survey 2, a minority of children either agreed or were unsure; 17% of the boys (n=4/23) and 16% of the girls (n=6/37), and so it could be said that for these children, the message of identifying respectful friendships based on equal power was not clear. Of this sample of six girls, two had been unsure and one had already expressed a negative attitude at Survey 1, with three changing their minds in a negative direction by Survey 2. Of the four boys, two remained unsure and two had changed their minds in a negative direction. At the same time, the phrasing of the statement, which does not make clear what a friend asks them to do, may have been unhelpful.

Table 4.6 If a friend tells you to do something you always have to do it

			Sex		Total
			1 Girl	2 Boy	
Survey 1	1 Agree	Count	4	2	6
		% within Sex	9.3%	6.5%	8.1%
	2 Disagree	Count	37	24	61
		% within Sex	86.0%	77.4%	82.4%
	3 Not sure	Count	2	5	7
		% within Sex	4.7%	16.1%	9.5%
Total		Count	43	31	74
		% within Sex	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Survey 2	1 Agree	Count	3	1	4
		% within Sex	8.1%	4.3%	6.7%
	2 Disagree	Count	31	19	50
		% within Sex	83.8%	82.6%	83.3%
	3 Not sure	Count	3	3	6
		% within Sex	8.1%	13.0%	10.0%
Total		Count	37	23	60
		% within Sex	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Survey 3	1 Agree	Count	0	1	1
		% within Sex	0.0%	3.6%	1.4%
	2 Disagree	Count	40	22	62
		% within Sex	97.6%	78.6%	89.9%
	3 Not sure	Count	1	5	6
		% within Sex	2.4%	17.9%	8.7%
Total		Count	41	28	69
		% within Sex	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

A second vignette, based on a scenario performed by the female facilitator was used to further understand children's attitudes towards peer pressure and sexual bullying:

Sofia is feeling very confused. One day her best friend Harry asked her to send him a photo of her private parts because he said it would be funny. Harry said he would keep it a secret and wouldn't share the photo with anyone. He said if Sofia didn't send the photo she wouldn't be any fun. She doesn't want to send it but Harry is her best friend, so she doesn't know what to do.

The vignette was followed by a single question:

Q3. What advice might you give to Sofia to help her?

The vast majority of the children who answered this question at Survey 1 (n=72, 90%) were clear that Sofia should not send the photo, suggesting that children were confident in their attitudes on this topic when they entered the programme. Only one boy answered 'I don't know' at Survey 1. Fourteen children (19%, 4 boys, 10 girls), anticipated that the photo might be shared and therefore Sofia should not trust her friend. A further four children specified that they understood this type of behaviour as sexual abuse (3 boys, 1 girl), and seven children advised that Sofia should tell someone.

After the programme, this 'favourable' attitude was sustained by all 58 children who had responded to this question, including the boy who was initially unsure. Thirteen children made specific reference to the PANTS¹⁵ rule covered within the programme to validate their response, for example, '*Always remember PANTS and privates are private*' (Girl, School C). There was a small increase in the number of children who suggested that Sofia should tell a trusted adult, and a small number of children who rationalised their response at Survey 2 and Survey 3, by stating that sending sexual images was illegal. These responses suggest that, at this age, children are confident in their attitudes towards this form of peer pressure and the programme may have helped to reinforce and validate children's existing attitudes on this issue. Findings from the previous measure on attitudes towards peer pressure, showed that a small number of children were either uncertain or agreed that if a friend asked them to do something they should do it. Responses to this vignette allowed for those attitudes to be explored in context and revealed that those children who were uncertain or

¹⁵ The Underwear Rule endorsed by the NSPCC to keep children safe from sexual abuse

presented 'undesirable' attitudes on the previous measure towards peer pressure held more 'favourable' attitudes toward this specific form of peer pressure. However, it may also be the case that asking children what a fictional character ought to do may not directly reflect how they would behave if a friend asked them to do something. Although children's attitudes towards this scenario appear to be positive, some children talked of being unable to relate to the scenario, as performed during the programme (see Chapter Five) and as such, these responses may be based on socially desirable attitudes towards indecent exposure rather than an indication of how children are able to make sense of this situation in relation to their own lived experience.

Staying safe from sexual abuse

Keeping children safe from sexual abuse is a topic which is tackled through several activities within the programme with the objective that children should recognise that sexual abuse is unacceptable and are able to identify the warning signs. Children's learning in this area was explored in the surveys through the following statements:

- e. Its ok to say "stop" if I don't like how close someone comes to me
- f. I can trust my feelings about whether the way someone touches me is good or bad
- g. If a grown-up tells you to do something, you always have to do it

The first statement, *'Its ok to say "stop" if I don't like how close someone comes to me'* is adapted from a measure from the Children's knowledge of Abuse Questionnaire (CKAQ) (Tutty, 1995) (*It's OK to say "no" and move away if someone touches you in a way you don't like*). This statement was used to measure children's attitudes towards protective behaviours and relates to a specific activity within the programme where children rehearse this situation. The desired response to the statement would be to agree and before the programme, 75% (n=55/73) of the children agreed with this statement; 83% (n=25/30) of the boys and 70% (30/43) of the girls. Of the boys, 7% (n=2/30) were unsure compared to 12% (n=5/43) of the girls. By Survey 2, the proportion of children who agreed had risen favourably to 96% (n=26/27) amongst the boys and 97% (n=37/38) amongst the girls. The number of children who were unsure had notably reduced so that none of the girls and only one boy, were unsure; this boy had 'disagreed a lot' with the statement before the programme began and had therefore shifted, to some extent, in a positive direction. By

Survey 3, the proportion of children who agreed remained high, although had reduced slightly from Survey 2 to 89% ($n=25/28$) of the boys and 85% ($n=34/40$) of the girls. The number of children who were unsure remained low, although these children's attitudes had shifted in a less positive direction. Only two children who had responded negatively at Survey 1, responded negatively again by Survey 3, both of whom were girls.

Changes in children's attitudes on this measure were statistically significant $\chi^2 (2) = 13.132$, $p < 0.05$ and further analysis showed changes were significant amongst the girls, $\chi^2 (2) = 10.792$, $p < 0.05$ but not amongst the boys. Follow up analysis using a Wilcoxon signed rank test showed that changes amongst the girls were significant between Survey 1 and Survey 2, $T = 11.5$, $p < 0.0167$, $r = -0.27$.

This would suggest that the programme was effective largely for those girls who were not sure or disagreed before the programme began. These findings are reinforced by focus group discussions, as outlined in Chapter Five, where girls more commonly referred to an increase in understanding around the topic of staying safe from sexual abuse compared to the boys. That is not to say that the programme was not effective for the boys, a high proportion of whom had a positive attitude at the start and for whom the programme may have reinforced this 'desirable' attitude. A comparison of repeated measures within schools using Friedman's test showed a statistically significant effect in School B $\chi^2 (2) = 7.143$, $p < 0.05$, however further analysis using a Wilcoxon test were not significant.

Table 4.7 It's ok to say 'stop' if I don't like how close someone comes to me

			Sex		Total
			1 Girl	2 Boy	
Survey 1	1 Agree	Count	30	25	55
		% within Sex	69.8%	83.3%	75.3%
	2 Disagree	Count	8	3	11
		% within Sex	18.6%	10.0%	15.1%
	3 Not sure	Count	5	2	7
		% within Sex	11.6%	6.7%	9.6%
Total		Count	43	30	73
		% within Sex	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Survey 2	1 Agree	Count	37	26	63
		% within Sex	97.4%	96.3%	96.9%
	2 Disagree	Count	1	0	1
		% within Sex	2.6%	0.0%	1.5%
	3 Not sure	Count	0	1	1
		% within Sex	0.0%	3.7%	1.5%
Total		Count	38	27	65
		% within Sex	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Survey 3	1 Agree	Count	34	25	59
		% within Sex	85.0%	89.3%	86.8%
	2 Disagree	Count	4	2	6
		% within Sex	10.0%	7.1%	8.8%
	3 Not sure	Count	2	1	3
		% within Sex	5.0%	3.6%	4.4%
Total		Count	40	28	68
		% within Sex	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

The second statement is also adapted from the CKAQ (Tutty, 1995), however some wording was amended due to some confusion among children during piloting about what ‘a touch’ meant (see Appendix 1). The ‘expected’ response to the statement, *‘I can trust my feelings about whether the way someone touches me is good or bad’* would be to agree. This statement is based on an activity which involved the children identifying and discussing different types of touch. Before the programme, attitudes were relatively varied with 58% (n=18/31) of the boys and 65% (n=28/43) of the girls in agreement. A relatively high proportion were unsure at 20% (n=15/74); 16% (n=5/31) of the boys and 23% (n=10/43) of the girls. At Survey 2, the proportion of those in agreement had increased; 70% (n=19/27) of the boys and 80% (n=30/37) of the girls. The proportion of those who were unsure rose slightly among the boys to 26% (n=7/27) but fell among the girls to 14% (n=5/37). These proportions were similar at Survey 3.

Changes in children’s attitudes overall, on this measure, were statistically significant $\chi^2 (2) = 8.929, p < 0.05$. Follow up analysis using a Wilcoxon signed rank test showed that changes amongst the girls were significant between Survey 1 and Survey 2, $T = 15, p < 0.0167, r = -0.27$ and changes amongst the boys were also significant between Survey 1 and Survey 2, $T = 14.50, p < 0.0167, r = -0.32$. Differences in scores between schools were not significant.

Although the proportion of children whose attitudes were positive at Survey 2 were high, the number of children who were unsure or disagreed was also notable. Of the seven girls who disagreed or were not sure at Survey 2, six had previously disagreed or were unsure at Survey 1 and therefore remained negative. Likewise, of the eight boys who disagreed or were unsure at Survey 2, three had previously disagreed or were unsure at Survey 1 and therefore remained negative; three had previously agreed and therefore moved in a negative direction. As such, the message does not appear to have been effective for nearly a quarter (n=15, 24%) of this group of children post-programme. Preparing children to engage in advance by including them in discussions around the aims of prevention programmes, and why schools think it is important, may help children to engage better with unfamiliar topics, and this is discussed in more detail in the following chapters.

Table 4.8 I can trust my feelings about whether the way someone touches me is good or bad

			Sex		Total
			1 Girl	2 Boy	
Survey 1	1 Agree	Count	28	18	46
		% within Sex	65.1%	58.1%	62.2%
	2 Disagree	Count	5	8	13
		% within Sex	11.6%	25.8%	17.6%
	3 Not sure	Count	10	5	15
		% within Sex	23.3%	16.1%	20.3%
Total		Count	43	31	74
		% within Sex	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Survey 2	1 Agree	Count	30	19	49
		% within Sex	81.1%	70.4%	76.6%
	2 Disagree	Count	2	1	3
		% within Sex	5.4%	3.7%	4.7%
	3 Not sure	Count	5	7	12
		% within Sex	13.5%	25.9%	18.8%
Total		Count	37	27	64
		% within Sex	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Survey 3	1 Agree	Count	29	17	46
		% within Sex	70.7%	60.7%	66.7%
	2 Disagree	Count	5	4	9
		% within Sex	12.2%	14.3%	13.0%
	3 Not sure	Count	7	7	14
		% within Sex	17.1%	25.0%	20.3%
Total		Count	41	28	69
		% within Sex	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

The third statement is drawn from the CKAQ (Tutty, 1995). The 'desirable' answer to this statement '*If a grown up tells you to do something, you always have to do it*' would be to disagree and at Survey 1 only 25% ($n=19/74$) disagreed with this statement; 19% ($n=6/31$) of the boys and 30% ($n=13/43$) of the girls. Amongst the boys, 13% ($n=4/31$) were unsure compared with 16% ($n=7/43$) of the girls. These findings contrast with findings from McElearney et al. (2011) where 70% of the sample of primary school children responding to this statement before receiving an intervention answered 'accurately'.

At Survey 2, the proportion of children who disagreed had slightly risen amongst the boys to 32% ($n=8/25$), and notably more among the girls to 57% ($n=21/37$). However, more boys agreed (60%) than disagreed with this statement. The proportion of children who were unsure reduced to 8% ($n=2/25$) of the boys and 8% ($n=3/37$) of the girls.

At Survey 3, the number of children who disagreed had increased significantly, particularly amongst the girls to 83% ($n=33/40$) and to 54% ($n=15/28$) of the boys. The proportion of boys who were unsure rose fractionally again to 18% ($n=5/28$) and the number of girls remained low at 5% ($n=2/40$).

Changes in children's attitudes overall were statistically significant $\chi^2(2) = 39.261, p < 0.05$ and further analysis showed changes were significant amongst the girls, $\chi^2(2) = 21.062, p < 0.05$ and amongst the boys, $\chi^2(2) = 18.667, p < 0.05$. Follow up analysis using a Wilcoxon signed rank test showed that changes amongst the girls were significant between Survey 1 and Survey 2, $T = 34, p < 0.0167, r = -0.25$ and between Survey 2 and Survey 3, $T = 15, p < 0.0167, r = -0.36$. Changes amongst the boys were statistically significant between Survey 2 and Survey 3, $T = 15, p < 0.0167, r = -0.41$.

A comparison of repeated measures within schools showed a statistically significant effect in each School: School A, $2 \chi^2(2) = 19.50, p < 0.05$; School B, $2 \chi^2(2) = 9.234, p < 0.05$; School C, $2 \chi^2(2) = 13.581, p < 0.05$. Further analysis using Wilcoxon tests showed that changes were significant in each school at Survey 3. In School A, changes in attitude were significant between Survey 2 and Survey 3, $T = 6, p < 0.0167, r = -0.44$ and in School B, changes in attitude were significant between Survey 2 and Survey 3, $T = 12, p < 0.0167, r = -0.42$. In School C, the change was significant between Survey 1 and Survey 3, $T = 0.00, p < 0.0167, r = -0.46$. Therefore, changes were particularly significant amongst the girls at Survey 2, although children's attitudes amongst both the boys and girls, and within all schools, were significantly more 'desirable' at Survey 3.

As with the earlier measure which asks children how they might respond if a friend tells them to do something, this statement may have been confusing for children as it is not clear what the grown-up has told them to do. However, these findings may also reflect the complex message the programme is attempting to convey: adults are identified as people who keep children safe, but also as potentially harmful. It is through the belief that adults act in the best interests of the child that adult power over children is legitimised and children are conditioned to do as teachers and parents tell them, particularly in the school setting (Punch, 2002). However, prevention programmes aim to empower children by encouraging them to recognise and assert their rights, particularly when they may be at risk from adults who are supposed to keep them safe. The challenge for programmes is that children may understand that their rights can only be asserted if adults permit it and this belief may be reflected in the number of children who believed they always have to do as adults tell them. However, these findings may also suggest that some children are aware that not all adults are protective, and this appears to be a concept that children have embraced as they have developed over time.

Table 4.9 If a grown up tells you to do something you always have to do it

			Sex		Total
			1 Girl	2 Boy	
Survey 1	1 Agree	Count	23	21	44
		% within Sex	53.5%	67.7%	59.5%
	2 Disagree	Count	13	6	19
		% within Sex	30.2%	19.4%	25.7%
	3 Not sure	Count	7	4	11
		% within Sex	16.3%	12.9%	14.9%
Total		Count	43	31	74
		% within Sex	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Survey 2	1 Agree	Count	13	15	28
		% within Sex	35.1%	60.0%	45.2%
	2 Disagree	Count	21	8	29
		% within Sex	56.8%	32.0%	46.8%
	3 Not sure	Count	3	2	5
		% within Sex	8.1%	8.0%	8.1%
Total		Count	37	25	62
		% within Sex	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Survey 3	1 Agree	Count	5	8	13
		% within Sex	12.5%	28.6%	19.1%
	2 Disagree	Count	33	15	48
		% within Sex	82.5%	53.6%	70.6%
	3 Not sure	Count	2	5	7
		% within Sex	5.0%	17.9%	10.3%
Total		Count	40	28	68
		% within Sex	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Help seeking

Staying safe from unhealthy relationships by recognising when and how to seek help, is a key theme in prevention programmes (Bell and Stanley, 2006; DMSS, 2012). This area of children's learning was explored through two statements:

j. If you have a secret that upsets you but an adult doesn't listen, you should find someone else to tell

k. When a child is feeling unsafe there are lots of places they might get help

The first statement is a measure of children's understanding of ways of disclosing and relates to programme content about seeking out appropriate adults to disclose to. A high proportion of children agreed with this statement at Survey 1; 77% (n=24/31) of the boys and 91% (n=39/43) of the girls. Only one girl was unsure compared to five boys. These figures were similar to those at Survey 2 with 76% of the boys (n=19/25) and 92% (n=34/37) of the girls in agreement, although the proportion of children who were unsure did not change; four boys and one girl. A comparable number of boys and girls agreed at Survey 3, with two boys and three girls stating they were unsure.

Although a high proportion of children agreed with the statement at each time point, at Survey 2 and Survey 3 a small proportion of children (n=9/62, 15%) either disagreed with or were unsure and as such, it could be said that the concept of finding an adult who will listen was not understood by those children. However, as noted above, although programmes aim to empower children by encouraging them to speak out to trusted adults, due to their minority status (Mayall, 2002), children may understand that adults might not always take them seriously or take their views into account. Although prevention programmes promote learning around who children can go to and how to disclose, children may understand that in reality their empowerment depends on the consent of adults. As noted in Chapter Six, programmes may need to consider that, given children's minority status, children should not carry the responsibility of speaking out to seek help alone.

Friedman's test of differences among repeated measures rendered a chi square value of 6.583 which was significant ($p < 0.05$), however differences amongst boys and girls were not significant and further analysis using a Wilcoxon signed rank test did not show significant changes.

Table 4.10 If you have a secret that upsets you but an adult doesn't listen you should find someone else to tell

			Sex		Total
			1 Girl	2 Boy	
Survey 1	1 Agree	Count	39	24	63
		% within Sex	90.7%	77.4%	85.1%
	2 Disagree	Count	3	2	5
		% within Sex	7.0%	6.5%	6.8%
	3 Not sure	Count	1	5	6
		% within Sex	2.3%	16.1%	8.1%
Total		Count	43	31	74
		% within Sex	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Survey 2	1 Agree	Count	34	19	53
		% within Sex	91.9%	76.0%	85.5%
	2 Disagree	Count	2	2	4
		% within Sex	5.4%	8.0%	6.5%
	3 Not sure	Count	1	4	5
		% within Sex	2.7%	16.0%	8.1%
Total		Count	37	25	62
		% within Sex	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Survey 3	1 Agree	Count	33	21	54
		% within Sex	82.5%	77.8%	80.6%
	2 Disagree	Count	4	4	8
		% within Sex	10.0%	14.8%	11.9%
	3 Not sure	Count	3	2	5
		% within Sex	7.5%	7.4%	7.5%
Total		Count	40	27	67
		% within Sex	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

The second statement relating to help seeking, *'When a child is feeling unsafe there are lots of places they might get help'* is a measure of children's understanding of the avenues available to them for support. This was designed to relate to programme activities that explore the various people and places children could go to for help, if needed. A high proportion of children agreed with this statement at Survey 1; 97% (n=28/29) of the boys and 95% (n=41/43) of the girls suggesting that children already have substantial knowledge of available sources of support. Only one boy disagreed and two girls were unsure. At Survey 2, all of the boys (n=26/26) agreed with this statement, however two girls disagreed and three girls were unsure, suggesting that five of the girls were not persuaded that there were lots of places they could go to for help. As discussed in Chapter Five, although programmes may help children to learn who they can speak out to, children need additional information about the consequences of seeking help and insufficient information can leave them feeling sceptical. At Survey 3, the proportion of those who either disagreed or were uncertain of this statement had risen slightly to 14% (n=4/28) among the boys and 14% (n=6/41) amongst the girls, indicating that this message was diluted over time for a small proportion of children, or that these children may have had negative experiences of help seeking. This suggests that children may benefit from opportunities for further discussion and from repetition of messages by teachers, once a programme ends. Changes in children's attitudes on this measure were not statistically significant. Although a high number of children had positive attitudes on this measure before the programme, it is possible that the programme helped to reinforce and clarify children's knowledge of available sources of support.

Table 4.11 When a child is feeling unsafe there are lots of places they might get help

			Sex		Total
			1 Girl	2 Boy	
Survey 1	1 Agree	Count	41	28	69
		% within Sex	95.3%	96.6%	95.8%
	2 Disagree	Count	0	1	1
		% within Sex	0.0%	3.4%	1.4%
	3 Not sure	Count	2	0	2
		% within Sex	4.7%	0.0%	2.8%
Total		Count	43	29	72
		% within Sex	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Survey 2	1 Agree	Count	31	26	57
		% within Sex	86.1%	100.0%	91.9%
	2 Disagree	Count	2	0	2
		% within Sex	5.6%	0.0%	3.2%
	3 Not sure	Count	3	0	3
		% within Sex	8.3%	0.0%	4.8%
Total		Count	36	26	62
		% within Sex	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Survey 3	1 Agree	Count	35	24	59
		% within Sex	85.4%	85.7%	85.5%
	2 Disagree	Count	4	1	5
		% within Sex	9.8%	3.6%	7.2%
	3 Not sure	Count	2	3	5
		% within Sex	4.9%	10.7%	7.2%
Total		Count	41	28	69
		% within Sex	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Supporting peers

Promoting healthy relationships through peer support is a topic addressed across a range of programme activities with the aim that children learn to develop empathy towards peers and are better able to recognise others emotions and offer appropriate support. This area of learning was explored through two statements:

- i. You always have to keep secrets
- l. If a friend is feeling very upset about something, it's right to tell their secret to an adult you trust

The first statement '*You always have to keep secrets*' is drawn from the CKAQ (Tutty, 1995) and is a measure of children's general attitudes towards keeping secrets, either their own or others. This topic is explicitly addressed within the programme through discussions of different types of secrets, including when secrets should be broken as a help seeking strategy. The 'expected' response would be to disagree and at Survey 1, responses to this statement were diverse; amongst the boys 45% (n=14/31) disagreed compared to 41% (n=17/42) of the girls. Five of the boys and three of the girls were unsure. These findings contrast with findings from McElearney et al's (2011) study in Northern Ireland where 94% of the study's sample of primary school children responding to this statement before receiving an intervention answered 'accurately'.

At Survey 2, attitudes amongst both the boys and girls remained fairly diverse with the proportion of boys who disagreed falling to 38% (n=10/26) and the proportion of girls who disagreed rising slightly to 52% (n=19/37). A large number of children who had responded unfavourably at Survey 1, also answered unfavourably at Survey 2 (n=25, 40%). A comparable number of children were unsure at Survey 2; three boys and three girls although these were not the same children as those at Survey 1, except for one boy and one girl. Responses at Survey 3 were similarly varied amongst both the boys and girls. Changes in children's attitudes on this measure were not statistically significant. This lack of change in attitudes may reflect the strong association for children between keeping secrets and being a trustworthy friend and for this reason, it should also be noted that the general nature of this statement, which did not specify the nature of the secrets, may have been misleading for some children. However, children may also feel that they lack power or the skills necessary to negotiate when to break secrets, particularly as confidentiality is rarely discussed with children (Ellis, 2006). Although children may learn to understand the differences between varying types of secrets, speaking out against an adult, or a friend, is

complex and if a lack of control around what might happen when secrets are shared is experienced, children may be less likely to tell. At the same time secrets may create feelings of power and control and, as discussed further in Chapter Five, these findings suggest that children may benefit from deeper discussion around this topic.

Table 4.12 You always have to keep secrets

			Sex		Total
			1 Girl	2 Boy	
Survey 1	1 Agree	Count	22	12	34
		% within Sex	52.4%	38.7%	46.6%
	2 Disagree	Count	17	14	31
		% within Sex	40.5%	45.2%	42.5%
	3 Not sure	Count	3	5	8
		% within Sex	7.1%	16.1%	11.0%
Total		Count	42	31	73
		% within Sex	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Survey 2	1 Agree	Count	15	13	28
		% within Sex	40.5%	50.0%	44.4%
	2 Disagree	Count	19	10	29
		% within Sex	51.4%	38.5%	46.0%
	3 Not sure	Count	3	3	6
		% within Sex	8.1%	11.5%	9.5%
Total		Count	37	26	63
		% within Sex	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Survey 3	1 Agree	Count	15	10	25
		% within Sex	36.6%	35.7%	36.2%
	2 Disagree	Count	16	12	28
		% within Sex	39.0%	42.9%	40.6%
	3 Not sure	Count	10	6	16
		% within Sex	24.4%	21.4%	23.2%
Total		Count	41	28	69
		% within Sex	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

The second statement, *'If a friend is feeling very upset about something, it's right to tell their secret to an adult you trust'* was adapted from a statement used in Ellis' (2006) study - *'It's right to tell other people about your friend's secret'* - and relates to children's attitudes towards breaking secrets in order to support their peers. As with the previous measure, responses to this statement at Survey 1 were diverse with less than half of the boys agreeing with this statement at 47% (n=14/30) and a higher number of the girls in agreement at 70% (n=30/43). A relatively high proportion - 20% (n=6/30) - of boys disagreed at Survey 1 compared with 12% (n=5/43) of girls. Similar findings were reported by Ellis (2006), where children's responses before the programme suggested that it was not understood that choosing to tell someone when a friend is unsafe is a positive action.

However, in contrast to children's attitudes reported in Ellis' study which did not change post-programme, at Survey 2, the proportion of children who agreed rose 'favourably', particularly amongst the boys to 89% (n=23/26) and had risen to 86% (n=31/36) amongst the girls. The proportion of children who were unsure fell to 8% (n=2/26) among the boys and to 8% (n=3/36) amongst the girls; only one girl who was unsure before the programme remained unsure afterwards. Only one child who responded negatively at Survey 1, did so at Survey 2 but had shifted in a positive direction by Survey 3. The number of children who agreed at Survey 2 remained comparable at Survey 3.

Changes in children's attitudes on this measure were highly significant $\chi^2 (2) = 18.403, p < 0.05$ and further analysis showed changes were significant amongst both the girls, $\chi^2 (2) = 5.956, p < 0.05$ and amongst the boys $\chi^2 (2) = 14.156, p < 0.05$. Follow up analysis using a Wilcoxon signed rank test showed that changes amongst the girls were significant between Survey 1 and Survey 2, $T = 61, p < 0.0167, r = -0.24$ and that changes amongst the boys were significant between Survey 1 and Survey 2, $T = 8, p < 0.0167, r = -0.44$ and between Survey 1 and Survey 3, $T = 14, p < 0.0167, r = -0.41$. Changes in children's attitudes were highly significant for children at School C, $\chi^2 (2) = 20.618, p < 0.05$ and follow up using a Wilcoxon test showed that changes were significant between Survey 1 and Survey 2, $T = 11, p < 0.0167, r = -0.46$ and between Survey 1 and Survey 3, $T = 0.00, p < 0.0167, r = -0.47$.

This encouraging result shows that after the programme, children's attitudes had shifted significantly in a positive direction. At six months, this change remained significant among the boys, indicating the continuing impact of the programme message which appears to have been received by the children as intended. These results suggest that children gained clarity around the circumstances under which sharing friends' secrets can be understood as

a positive action. The previous measures relating to help seeking showed that children's attitudes towards self-protective behaviours were highly 'favourable' and this result demonstrates a promising shift in children's understanding of their own role in supporting their peers.

Table 4.13 If a friend is feeling very upset about something it's right to tell their secret to an adult you trust

			Sex		Total
			1 Girl	2 Boy	
Survey 1	1 Agree	Count	30	14	44
		% within Sex	69.8%	46.7%	60.3%
	2 Disagree	Count	8	10	18
		% within Sex	18.6%	33.3%	24.7%
	3 Not sure	Count	5	6	11
		% within Sex	11.6%	20.0%	15.1%
Total		Count	43	30	73
		% within Sex	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Survey 2	1 Agree	Count	31	23	54
		% within Sex	86.1%	88.5%	87.1%
	2 Disagree	Count	2	1	3
		% within Sex	5.6%	3.8%	4.8%
	3 Not sure	Count	3	2	5
		% within Sex	8.3%	7.7%	8.1%
Total		Count	36	26	62
		% within Sex	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Survey 3	1 Agree	Count	32	23	55
		% within Sex	78.0%	82.1%	79.7%
	2 Disagree	Count	6	3	9
		% within Sex	14.6%	10.7%	13.0%
	3 Not sure	Count	3	2	5
		% within Sex	7.3%	7.1%	7.2%
Total		Count	41	28	69
		% within Sex	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Overview of children's learning

These findings present a complex picture of children's understandings of the concepts presented in the programme. Of the 12 survey items shown below in Table 4.14, two relate to gender equality (statement 1 and 2), one to communication and managing conflict (statement 3), two to peer pressure and bullying (statement 4 and 8), three to staying safe from sexual abuse (statement 5, 6 and 7), three to help seeking strategies (statement 9, 10 and 11) and two to breaking secrets to support peers (statement 9 and 12).

Table 4.14 Survey items

1.	If a girl has a boyfriend, she shouldn't spend lots of time with her own friends
2.	Mums and Dads should both be able to have a job if they want to
3.	Shouting is the only way to sort out an argument
4.	If someone is bullying me, I should keep quiet about it
5.	It's ok to say "stop" if I don't like how close someone comes to me
6.	I can trust my feelings about whether the way someone touches me is good or bad
7.	If a <u>grown-up</u> tells you to do something, you always have to do it
8.	If a <u>friend</u> asks you to do something, you always have to do it
9.	You always have to keep secrets
10.	If you have a secret that upsets you but an adult doesn't listen, you should find someone else to tell
11.	When a child is feeling unsafe there are lots of places they might get help
12.	If a friend is feeling very upset about something, it's right to tell their secret to an adult you trust

Although children mainly entered the programme with positive attitudes on most measures, at baseline, children's attitudes were least 'desirable' towards four concepts including: knowing what is good and bad touch (6), challenging adult authority (7), keeping secrets (9), and knowing when to break promises (12). These concepts are key to children's understanding around self-protection (saying no to authority figures) and supporting themselves (telling secrets).

Similarities can be drawn from these findings and those identified in Tutty's (2014) study of sexual abuse prevention programmes, which found a number of issues that were particularly challenging for young children either at pre-test or at follow up, including: 'saying no to authority figures, understanding that trusted adults might act in ways that are unpleasant, knowing rules about breaking promises and keeping secrets, and understanding that children are not to blame if they are touched in ways that feel uncomfortable.' (Tutty, 2014: 22). In the present study, with the exception of the statement on keeping secrets, attitudes

for most children had improved on these measures following the programme or at six months.

Although individual measures revealed less 'desirable' attitudes which did not shift among a small number of children, these were not consistently the same children across all survey questions: children who presented negative attitudes on some measures did not present negative attitudes on others. For example, among 35 children who presented negative or uncertain attitudes on two measures of gender equality at baseline (15 boys, 20 girls), eight children (4 boys, 4 girls) remained negative across both measures. However, there was no discernible correlation among those children presenting negative attitudes towards gender inequality and those presenting negative attitudes towards measures of conflict and disclosure, for example. Only one child (a girl) with negative attitudes towards gender equality also presented negative attitudes towards conflict management at Survey 1 and Survey 2 (although this had shifted at Survey 3), and three children (2 boys, 1 girl) presented negative attitudes that did not shift towards disclosing to adults; none of the children presented negative attitudes that did not shift across all three areas. However, those children who most frequently presented negative attitudes across individual questions were boys and girls alike, who were aged 10 on entry to the programme.

Children's satisfaction with the programme

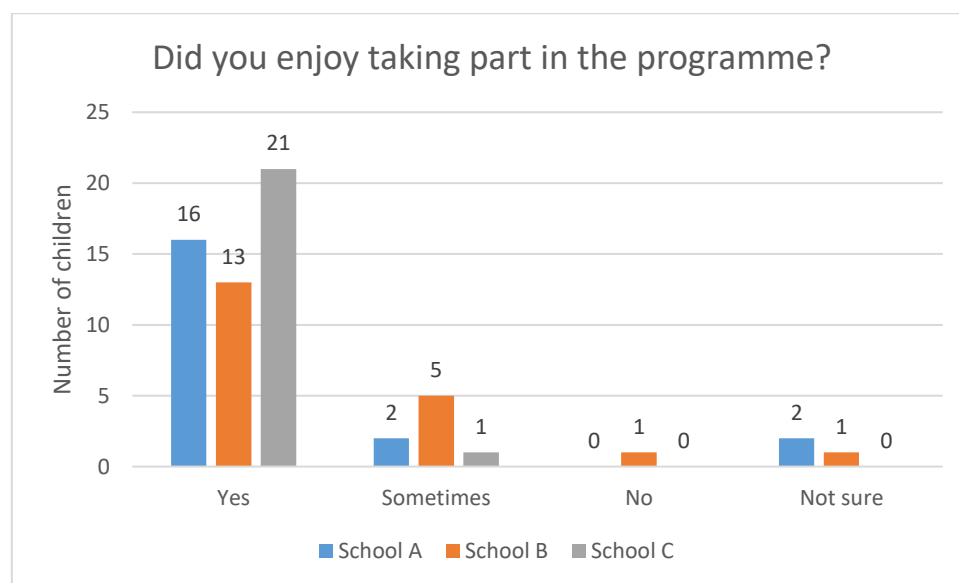
Two evaluation questions relating to the children's satisfaction with the programme were included in Survey 2:

1. Did you enjoy taking part in the two-day Healthy Relationships project at school?
(Yes/Sometimes/No/Not sure)
2. Is there anything you would like to change about the Healthy Relationships project? If yes, please say what:

Children's responses to these questions expose the extent to which they engaged with the programme and the majority of children (n=50, 80%) responding to the first question answered 'Yes' they enjoyed the programme (28 girls, 22 boys), suggesting that most children's learning experiences were positive. Eight children (13%) answered 'Sometimes' (5 girls, 3 boys), three girls (5%) answered 'Not sure' and one girl (2%) answered 'No'. This girl expressed her dissatisfaction with the lack of opportunity to actively participate stating

‘When choosing people, pick fairly’ (Girl, School B) and this may have been the cause of her disengagement, although her later response to whether the programme had helped in Survey 3, was positive. As discussed in Chapter Five, children felt strongly about having the opportunity to participate and this was one of the main criticisms of the programme that emerged during focus group discussions. Of the 12 children who answered ‘Sometimes’, ‘Not sure’ or ‘No’, four were from School A (2, boys, 2 girls), seven were from School B (all girls) and one was from School C (a boy), indicating that children from School C were the most engaged and girls from School B were the least. In contrast to School B (Catholic school), where PSHE *‘doesn’t always get taught’* (see Chapter Five), School C was the only school in which sex and relationships education was built into the curriculum. Given this context, children in school C may have been better prepared to engage as the concepts addressed were already an integral part of children’s learning.

Figure 4.1 Did you enjoy taking part in the programme?

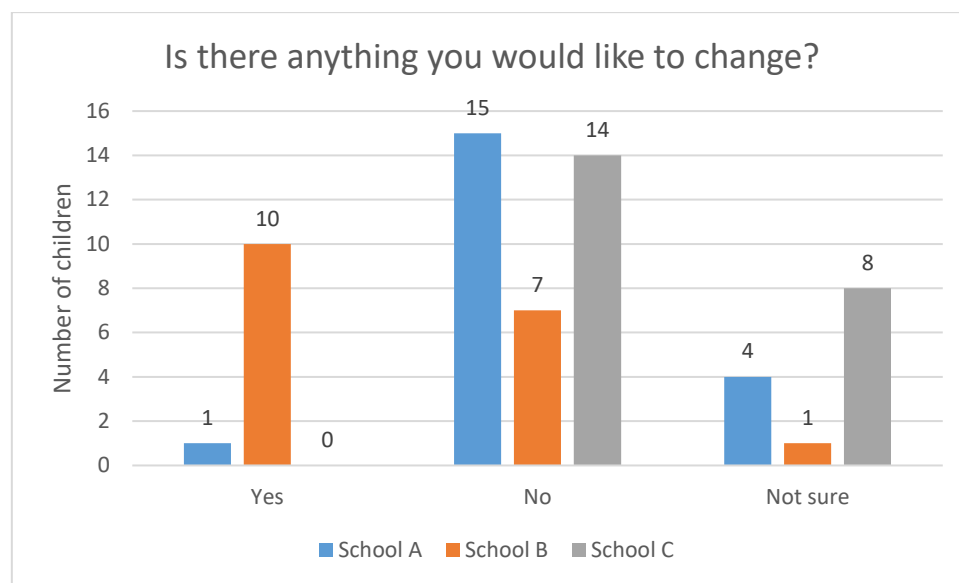


In response to whether they would like to change anything about the programme, most children (n=36, 60%) said ‘No’ (19 girls, 17 boys), 13 children (22%) answered ‘Not sure’ (7 girls, 6 boys) and 11 children (18%) answered ‘Yes’ (9 girls, 2 boys). Most of the 11 children who answered ‘Yes’ were from School B (n=10, 8 girls, 2 boys) and one girl from School A, suggesting that children in School B were the least satisfied; five of these girls from School B had also expressed some level of disengagement with the programme. All 11 children commented on what they would change, with six references to the methods used; two girls wanted to include more games including the one girl from School A who suggested *‘They*

should have more people and more games' (Girl School A), one girl wanted less games but 'more input' (although it is unclear if this meant from the facilitators or the children), two girls commented that they weren't given the opportunity to participate as much as they would have liked, and one girl wanted to include the use of videos. One girl suggested that the programme should allow the opportunity for discussion in a private setting stating, *'if people say that they want to say it in private that they actually could like a patient-doctor confidentiality'* (Girl, School B). Three comments focussed on the length of the programme, which the children thought was too short. Two comments related to the programme content, with one girl responding that she would change *'the disgusting bits'* (Girl, School B) and another girl stating *'I don't think I was ready to talk about private parts because I just started Year 6'* (Girl, School B). Children's requirement for participative learning and opportunities for in-depth discussion, particularly within the peer group where children can begin to address difficult and unfamiliar topics together, is explored further in Chapter Five.

As noted above, children at School B presented higher levels of disengagement and dissatisfaction with the programme. This was the only Catholic faith school in the study and children from this school may be less familiar with speaking about topics raised in the programme referring, for example, to discussions around body parts as 'disgusting bits'. Some resistance was apparent during an initial meeting with school staff who voiced concern about children discussing the topic of 'sexual pressure'; teaching 'sex education' was not perceived as in accordance with their faith and staff were sensitive to the views of some parents who they anticipated would have strong views about not teaching these topics. However, contrary to staff expectations, those parents did not contact the school to complain and this raises questions about how a school's ethos is determined. Some children's resistance to these topics could be the result of implicit messages that these topics are off limit and as such, programme messages may continue to be ineffective for such children unless teachers and parents corroborate them.

Figure 4.2 Is there anything you would like to change?



Children's reflections on programme impact

Survey 3 included two questions on children's reflections on the impact of the programme:

1. Did you talk to your friends in class about anything you did on the Healthy Relationships project afterwards? If yes, please say what.
2. Do you think the Healthy Relationships project has helped you? If yes, please say how.

Children's responses to the first question indicate the extent to which programme messages were shared and sustained after the programme: 24 children (38%) answered 'No' they didn't talk to friends about the programme afterwards (12 girls, 12 boys), 22 children (34%) answered 'Not sure' (16 girls, 6 boys) and 18 children (28%) answered 'Yes' (11 girls, 7 boys). Therefore, just over a third of the children had not continued the conversations with their peers, but a similar number had seemingly engaged in conversations about what they had learnt after the programme. Most of the children's comments on what they had said were non-specific and were based around what they had done during the programme and their enjoyment of it:

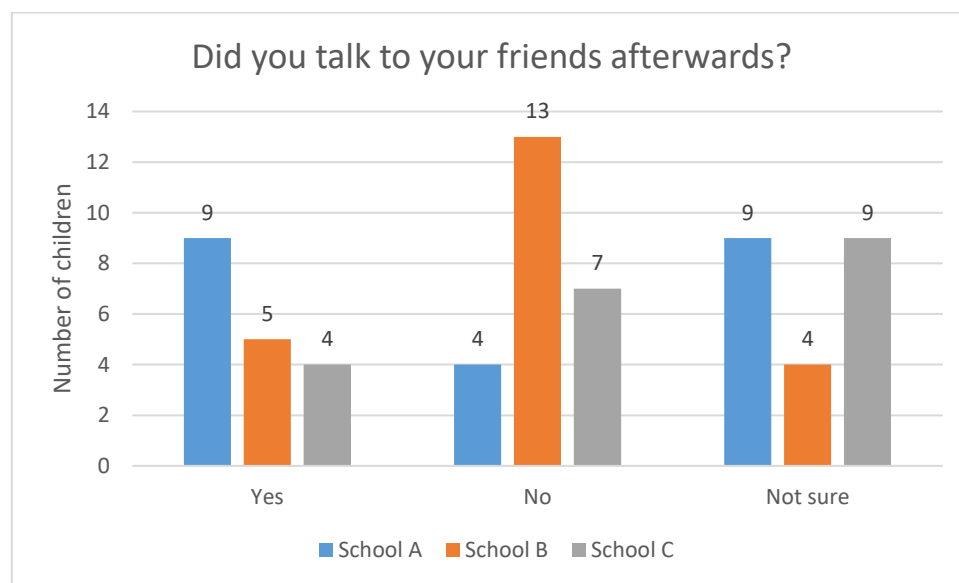
'I told we had fun and talked what we have learned and what we did' (Boy, School A).

A small number of children gave more detailed examples of the discussions they had with their friends which focussed specifically on the topics of peer pressure and sexual abuse:

'We talked about if you've ever come across someone that asks you to do things you don't want to do' (Girl, School A)

'To not show anyone your private parts of your body and if someone touched you in a bad way tell an adult' (Girl, School C)

Figure 4.3 Did you talk to your friends afterwards?

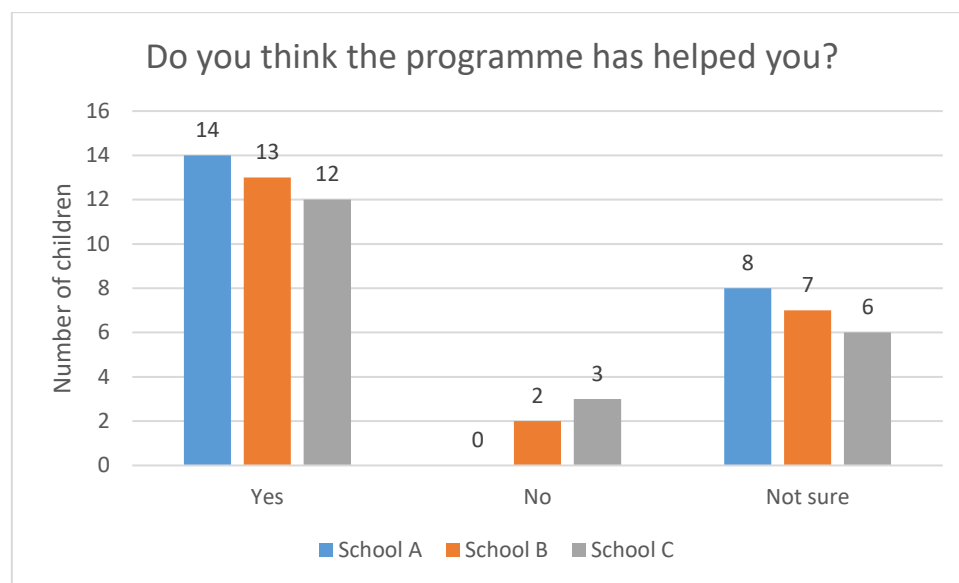


In response to whether they thought the programme had helped them, the majority of children (n=39, 60%) answered 'Yes' (23 girls, 16 boys), 21 children (32%) answered 'Not sure' (13 girls, 8 boys) and only five children (8%) answered 'No' (3 girls, 2 boys). One of the girls who answered 'No' clarified this:

'Because I already knew all of the things they told us but it was really fun I loved it. I also loved that we got time from class.' (Girl, School A)

Notably, of the seven girls in School B who had expressed some level of disengagement with the programme at Survey 2, at Survey 3, four of these girls stated that the programme had in fact helped them stating: *'It tell me you should not always listen to someone'* (Girl, School B) and *'It helps me to know what and what not to do'* (Girl, School B).

Figure 4.4 Do you think the programme has helped you?



Thirty-nine children (60%) provided some examples of how they thought the programme had helped them. Many of these were general statements, for example around their understanding of early warning signs of unhealthy relationships: *'It helps me by understanding what some people may be like'* (Girl, School A) and *'It has helped me to understand what is good or bad in a relationship'* (Boy, School C). Others gave non-specific examples of their learning around self-protective behaviours: *'It's given me advice on what to do in certain situations'* (Girl, School B) and *'Now I know what to do in tough situations like this'* (Boy, School B) and a similar number of boys and girls had made broad statements such as these.

A small number of boys gave more specific examples of how they had used what they had learnt and how the programme had positively impacted on their behaviour:

'Because a boy was rude to me and I used the rules for example STOP!' (Boy, School C)

'The healthy relationships project has helped me because I haven't act aggressive to other people' (Boy, School A)

In comparison, a small number of girls from across the three schools gave examples of how the programme had increased their sense of self-assurance:

'It's helped me with my confidence and be more safe around people' (Girl, School A)

'I think it taught me that I'm in charge of my body' (Girl, School B)

'Helped me to not worry and to not think about it' (Girl, School C)

In addition to comments around increased learning, one boy noted that taking part in the programme had helped him in a social context: *'Because I've made more friends'* (Boy, School A).

Findings from the focus group discussions, reported in Chapter Five, provide further reflections around children's experiences of the programme and their perceptions of its impact on them.

Key Survey Findings

- Most of the children entered the programme with positive attitudes towards the concepts addressed in the programme. This finding is important, as outcomes where there is no effect or where effect sizes are small might otherwise be interpreted as indicating a lack of success. This was evident on a number of measures where high proportions of children demonstrated positive attitudes both before and after the programme including: *'Mums and Dads should both be able to have a job if they want to'*; *'If someone is bullying me, I should keep quiet about it'*; *'When a child is feeling unsafe there are lots of places they might get help'*, and it is feasible that children's participation in the programme reinforced existing positive attitudes in respect of these measures.
- Measures which showed the most change immediately following the programme included two statements on attitudes towards staying safe from sexual abuse: *'It's ok to say "stop" if I don't like how close someone comes to me'* and *'I can trust my feelings about whether the way someone touches me is good or bad'*; and one measure of attitudes towards supporting peers, *'If a friend is feeling very upset about something, it's right to tell their secret to an adult you trust'*. These findings are encouraging, however a small proportion of children demonstrated 'unfavourable' attitudes on these measures after the programme and at six months, and although these were not always the same children, these outcomes may be indicators of those children at highest risk.
- Positive change was more likely to be discernible at six months than post-programme on three measures; 1. in relation to early warning signs of unequal gender relationships, *'If a girl has a boyfriend she shouldn't spend lots of time with her own friends'*, 2. in relation to communication and managing conflict, *'Shouting is the only way to sort out an argument'*, 3. in relation to identifying unequal power relationships, *'If a grown up tells you to do something, you always have to do it'*. This could mean that for a number of children there was some confusion immediately after the programme, or that their age and experience affected attitude change on these measures.

- Gender differences were discernible across four measures. Messages were less effective for boys than for girls on two measures: one relating to gender equality; *'If a girl has a boyfriend, she shouldn't spend lots of time with her own friends'*, and one relating to unequal power relationships, *'If a grown up tells you to do something you always have to do it'*. Positive change was particularly evident amongst the boys in relation to peer support, *'If a friend is feeling very upset about something, it's right to tell their secret to an adult you trust'*, and amongst the girls in relation to protective behaviours, *'It's ok to say "stop" if I don't like how close someone comes to me'*. Gender differences were not significant on other measures.
- A lack of variation in the sample in relation to age and disability meant that these factors were not tested for in the main analysis. However, children who were aged 11 on entry to the programme demonstrated low levels of negative attitudes across all measures, and the one boy who specified having a learning difficulty revealed a high level of negative attitudes across several measures.
- Most children's experiences of the programme were positive, indicating a high level of engagement and learning, with just under a third of children stating they had continued to engage with peers about what they learned after the programme. Children from School C appeared to be the most satisfied and girls from School B were the least satisfied. In contrast to School B, children at School C may have been better prepared to engage with programme material as the concepts addressed were already an integral part of children's learning.

The qualitative data which follows in Chapter Five will provide a more detailed account of children's reflections on both their learning and their satisfaction with the programme.

CHAPTER FIVE: CHILDREN'S RESPONSES TO SCHOOL-BASED PROGRAMMES

Introduction

Children's responses to school-based programmes and their learning from them are closely related as learning is more likely to occur when children are engaged with the material (Kirkpatrick, 1998). Obtaining children's views of the programme studied here is therefore important in understanding which elements of the programme proved to be effective, as well as the mechanisms through which change is effected for this age group. As such, children were asked about aspects of the programme they liked, disliked or would change and their responses to these questions are discussed in the first half of the chapter in '*Children's responses and engagement*' with findings in this section reported under the headings: programme content, methods of delivery and programme structure. Key themes emerged from a process of inductive and deductive analysis as described in the methodology chapter, with findings from this study reported under key headings. The themes emerging through a process of inductive analysis, are original to this research and these are described under key headings: locating programme content in children's experiences; children's requirement for in-depth discussion; value of drama and interactive methods which promotes participative learning; value of learning within the peer group setting. Deductive analysis identified themes which build on and strengthen those identified in the existing literature and these include: adopting a whole-school approach as a means of achieving readiness; children's appeal for authentic and embodied learning; contextualising learning around gender equality within children's everyday lives; facilitator characteristics; programme length and intensity; who should deliver programmes.

The aims of the programme, like many programmes developed and evaluated to date (Bell and Stanley, 2006; DMSS, 2012; Ellis, 2006; Reid Howie Associates, 2002) focus on increasing children's awareness and understanding of healthy and unhealthy relationships, and on developing their help seeking skills so children are better equipped with the relevant language and knowledge to recognise and stay safe from abusive relationships now and/or in the future. Programme outcomes also relate to improving attitudes by promoting affective change such as developing empathy, increasing confidence and empowerment, as well as encouraging positive beliefs through challenging attitudes that condone and conceal abusive relationships. Children's views of the impact of the programme on these aspects of their learning are discussed in the second half of the chapter in *Programme impact*, and

findings in this second section are reported under the headings: improved knowledge and awareness, and improved skills, confidence and relationships. The themes identified under these headings derive from the topics covered in the programme and relate to one of the research questions for this study which aims to identify whether school-based programmes can improve younger children's knowledge and skills to enable them to recognise different forms of violence. The shift towards the development of integrated programmes (see Chapter two), means that findings from the programme considered here, which addresses a range of topics, will be relevant for other integrated programmes, as well as the development of guidance for the new Relationships Education curriculum due to commence in primary schools from September 2020. In this chapter, pseudonyms are assigned to individual children's quotes to ensure the anonymity of the children participating in the study.

Children's responses and engagement

Programme content

The aim of the programme is to promote healthy relationships through increasing children's knowledge and understanding of healthy and unhealthy relationships. As noted above, this programme addresses a range of forms of violence including physical, emotional and sexual abuse as well as addressing the broader issue of bullying and peer-based violence. Topics covered in the programme include healthy and unhealthy friendships, gender and power in relationships, communication and conflict management, early warning signs, peer pressure, staying safe from sexual abuse and help seeking and support. On the whole, most children found the topics enjoyable and stimulating, with a number of children reporting that they *'liked it because they were teaching us something that somethings I didn't already know'*. As noted in Chapter two, bullying prevention work is well developed in schools and one girl reflected on how the programme material furthered her previous learning in school on this topic:

*I think if we didn't have this workshop we wouldn't learn as much as we know now
'cause they don't really tell us where to go and what to do when you're being bullied,*

it's just assemblies about bullying like what a bully can do to you and that's about it.

(Girl, School C, Group 2)

This child appears to be expressing a need for more authentic or embodied learning around the topic of bullying rather than simply being told about the issue during assemblies. On the other hand, two children (both girls) were less motivated by the material suggesting that although they felt the programme had served to remind them of previous learning on the topic of help seeking, they felt that this aspect of the programme had simply reproduced what was learnt before and that they hadn't learnt anything new:

But they should have told us new things because we've heard all those things before when ChildLine came and our teachers telling us that, but we did learn a lot we remembered now, they reminded us about it, but they could have told us new things.

(Girl 1, School A, Group 2)

Like they could have told us about, like we knew where to go for help and stuff. They reminded us but they said to us that they're going to tell us new things, so I thought that I would have found out more things, but I remembered some of the things. They reminded us but we didn't really know anything new. They could have told us like how to get to the centre like and if like, they could have told us more things about ChildLine. All they told us about ChildLine was that it's somewhere where you can call them, they won't, they won't like, you won't see their numbers like they won't see that you've called them and stuff like that. (Girl 2, School A, Group 2)

Evidently, help seeking is a topic that interests these children and many children, like the two quoted above, conceptualised the programme as them being 'told things'. However, the appeal made by children in the extracts above for 'more things' suggests that children want material to be more relevant to their current lives. The requirement for material to be meaningful reflects findings from Stanley et al.'s (2015) review where it was reported that young people valued content that was 'real' and applicable to their own experience. The frustration expressed by these children may also reflect a lack of preparation and understanding from the programme delivery team concerning what learning on these topics

children had previously done in schools so that programme messages were simply repeating what children already knew (see further discussion below). Although a more tailored approach would require a sound understanding of children's prior knowledge, without such preparation, programme content may be disregarded as 'not relevant' (Fox et al., 2014: 38). These criticisms may also be linked to a lack of opportunity to explore this topic within the programme. The theme of help seeking was explored to some extent during the focus group, with children considering what might happen if they rang ChildLine¹⁶ and this is discussed further below, under Programme Impact. A lack of depth of information in general was a criticism made by three further children who suggested the programme could be improved with '*more details, more stuff and explain more about it*'. The suggestion in the quote above that children this age need information to be clear and concrete is discussed further below. These comments expose the inherent tensions in delivering a programme that aims to engage children but is based on an adult driven agenda – this was a programme for children written and largely controlled by adults. Involving children in the design of programmes and listening to children's views, such as those expressed here around the lack of depth of programme material, might address this imbalance and ensure that the content is more relevant for children in their current lives. Conceptualising children as active agents in the acquirement of knowledge (James et al., 1998), indicates the importance of encouraging them to explore topics raised within programmes so that their involvement is participatory rather than passive. The programme studied here aimed to empower children through their active participation and to enable them to recognise and assert their rights. However, empowerment requires programmes to acknowledge children's own understandings of the extent of their agency in the context of child-adult power relations (Mayall, 2002); this is particularly relevant for programmes delivered within the school environment where children are governed by adults. The suggestion in the extracts above that children need clarity about what would happen if they seek help may reflect their understanding that their empowerment and agency largely depends on the consent of adults and their willingness to help them.

The topics of sexual abuse and sexual pressure were the areas where children participating in the focus groups were most likely to be critical. For most children, this was new and challenging material and eight children participating in the focus groups (four girls, four

¹⁶ Childline.org.uk is a counselling service provided for children in the UK by the NSPCC charity

boys) described feeling 'shocked' or 'surprised' that they were discussing these topics, although the opportunity to discuss these topics was embraced by others:

I found it exciting but at the same time like I thought like that it wasn't our age but at the same time it was exciting. It helped me learn and expand my brain. (Boy, School B, Group2)

Children who were more resistant to this material described feeling discomfort when exploring these topics, frequently describing their age as a factor in their resistance:

Nicola: *Charlie's story about sending pictures of private parts, yeah. How did you feel about that?*

Zach: *It felt a bit weird and I was a bit shocked and weird at the same time 'cause doing sexual abuse and showing your private parts isn't really going in and I just wasn't expecting it. I thought we were doing like a higher year, like Year 7*

Nicola: *You think that's for children older than you, do you?*

Zach: *Yeah*

Nicola: *And did you say didn't go in? Do you mean it didn't go into your mind?*

Zach: *I meant didn't pay attention 'cause I didn't want to learn about it now, learn it but later on*

(Zach: Boy, School C, Group 1)

Differences in children's ability to accept these topics were apparent in some of the focus group discussions and these differences were evident across all schools, amongst both boys and girls. Some children approached these topics openly, seeing these discussions as beneficial and worthwhile, whereas other children were more unwilling to accept what was perceived as adult knowledge:

Emily: *So it means that, so it says that we need to help stop sexual abuse...*

Hesam: *Yes*

Abigail: *Don't! Please*

Jasmine: *Ughhhh!!!!*

Hesam: *We're in year 6, we're grown-ups so...*

Abigail: *You're grown up?*

Hesam: *We're Year 6*

Jasmine: *You're grown up? (Laugh) You're grown up?*

Hesam: *We're Year 6, we need to learn about it*

Abigail: *You're grown up?*

Hesam: *We do learn a bit in Year 6*

Abigail: *But Hesam, it's like when you say it, it's just weird*

Emily: *If you're going to be immature about the PANTS thing then I can't wait to see what will happen in sex education 'cause we're doing that*

Abigail: *(Shouts) Yeah in Year 7!*

Jasmine: *I won't do nothing, I won't laugh because it's about my body and I need to know about that*

(Girls: Emily, Abigail, Jasmine; Boy: Hesam – all School A, Group 2)

Although children in the school context are positioned in relation to their age and learning stage, the receptiveness of children taking part in school-based programmes can differ. Despite such differences, discussions which take place amongst the peer group, such as the one cited above, reflect the ways that children can begin to work through difficult subjects together. Learning within the group setting provides opportunities for those children who are more receptive to material covering sexual content to facilitate those who are less so. Through their collective learning, children can encourage each other to begin to think of these topics as relevant to their age group and this may benefit those children with more resistant attitudes to unfamiliar content. In this extract, Abigail shows that she is currently unable to accept material relating to sexual content, however by starting to debate this within the peer group, rather than being 'told things' by adults, Abigail is beginning to confront the issue. Jasmine, on the other hand, seems to initially agree with Abigail that this is adult material and not something she wants to hear about. However, by the end of this

extract Jasmine appears to have been swayed, agreeing with Hesam and Emily that this is both important and relevant to her. This discussion demonstrates the value of giving children space to talk within a group setting, how children are able to work things out between themselves in groups and that children can be trusted to do so. Using focus groups as a method of data collection has enabled children in this group to explore their own and other's ideas and attitudes and to both agree with and challenge each other's responses (Lombard, 2015). Without this approach, valuable discussions such as this would not have been captured. By including mixed gender groups, the dynamic between boys and girls, as well as the range of views among them, is obtained.

Despite some level of discomfort, the response of the majority of children suggests that the programme material was suitable for children of this age group. The fact that some children were not used to addressing this material perhaps highlights the need for children to learn about these topics in schools as some children do not appear to be hearing these messages regularly elsewhere, for instance at home. Feelings of embarrassment when discussing these issues is understood to be appropriate for this age group (see Tutty, 2014) (and possibly also for some older children and adults) and there is some suggestion (Fox et al., 2014) that without some level of discomfort when learning about 'sensitive' issues such as these, learning may not be as effective (see further discussion in Chapter Seven). However, although some level of discomfort was apparent among children across all the schools, three girls observed in the Catholic school reacted particularly strongly against these topics. Although there may be various reasons why these girls were not able to tolerate this material, their collective response may reflect the ethos of the school where these topics do not appear to get talked about (see discussion under '*Accessing the schools*' in Chapter three), and messages children may be hearing at home which do not support programme messages could moderate the effects of the programme (Walsh et al., 2015) (see further discussion in Chapter Seven on preparing schools for programmes). In contrast to one-off programmes delivered by external agencies, a holistic whole-school approach (Maxwell et al., 2010; Maxwell and Aggleton, 2014), which generates sustained attitude change may help children to learn how to talk about these issues over time.

Before the programme, children were given very little information about the programme and in most cases were told little more than the title of the programme by their teacher. This created some confusion for children who described feeling unprepared and 'surprised' to be engaging in these subjects:

You come in and healthy relationships and then you're talking about being safe, it's not what you were thinking to talk about it, you think it's to talk about healthy friendships. (Boy, School 3, Group 1)

I thought healthy relationships was about healthy things about you and your friend not like something like this, what you think about sex and all that. (Boy, School 3, Group 1)

By situating the programme under the broad framework of 'healthy relationships', the purpose of the programme is obscured for children. The extracts above suggest that even at the end of the programme these children remained uncertain about what was meant by 'healthy relationships'. Introducing the programme to children in this way, and without further clarity, meant that children were unprepared to engage in the material. If children are fully acknowledged as active learners whose acquirement of knowledge is a dynamic rather than passive process, readiness emerges as important (Howath et al., 2018; Stanley et al., 2015). Increasing children's readiness by preparing them to engage in programme topics in advance, as well as improving schools' readiness by helping them to facilitate children's engagement could be a powerful mechanism to reduce children's anxiety or surprise to be engaging in these topics (see further discussion in Chapter Seven). At the same time, the unequal power dynamic between adult teachers and children means children have little choice whether to participate in programmes such as this. None of the children participating in the programme during this study were provided with opportunities to opt themselves out or encouraged to leave if they wished. Where a small number of girls in the Catholic school did detach themselves from discussions (see discussion in Chapter Seven), adult teachers encouraged them to re-join, rather than sit out of the group. A child-centred approach where children are recognised as actors with agency with a right to participate, or not, (even when adults feel participation is in a child's best interest) was lacking in this programme.

Methods of delivery

a. Drama and interactive methods

The methods used to deliver the programme emerged as an important factor in children's enjoyment and engagement. A range of methods was employed to engage children in learning including creative and visual activities such as games, and drama as well as small group work and whole-group discussions. These participative and interactive methods, like those used in other such programmes developed to date (Bell and Stanley, 2006; DMSS, 2012; Hale et al., 2012) appeared to be suited to a range of learning styles and were valued highly by most of the children. The appeal of these methods for some was that they provided a different way of learning in school, as opposed to the more traditional approach of learning through written work, and boys in particular described this experiential approach as both refreshing and enticing:

...with our normal lessons you'd sit at your tables, Miss would talk about stuff, she'd ask some questions and then you'd get to writing, or then you'd do something else...
(Boy, School C, Group 1)

I enjoyed that because we didn't do much work or writing but we still learnt a lot and I like that way of learning because it doesn't require lots of writing, but we still learnt. (Boy, School B, Group 2)

I thought like it might just be a normal lesson so I didn't feel anything like excitement 'cause I thought it was going to be a normal lesson, but when [male facilitator] and [female facilitator] came in and we started to play games and all the circle and chairs, I felt excited about what we're going to do next. (Boy, School B, Group 2)

I love how it started like we started off with playing games and I think that was a boost. (Girl, School C, Group 2)

These participatory and skills-based approaches recognise children as active participants in their learning. Although children lacked control and ownership of the overall process, the design and delivery of this programme did appear to offer children opportunities for active participation. Only two children, notably girls, suggested that they would have preferred more conventional learning methods:

They could have, like if [the teacher] said it was ok, they could have let them borrow our literacy books and they could have like written in our books if we know anything about healthy relationships. (Girl, School B, Group1)

It might be good if we do a bit of, not writing homework but like research, so that maybe the children might be prepared for what they might be doing tomorrow. (Girl, School B, Group1)

However, the games and drama components of the programme emerged as the most popular and enjoyable methods of learning and children talked about the enhancement of their learning by doing ‘...instead of all just sat down with the teacher talking’ (Girl, School C, Group 2). These participative approaches, which draw on theatre in education theory (Pammenter, 2002), are less dependent on literacy skills which usually characterise learning in schools and, as such, are more inclusive, particularly amongst populations of children where English is an additional language and for low academic achievers or those with learning difficulties. Similar comments focussing on the value of participative and interactive methods for children and young people are reported in other evaluations of programmes (Thiara and Ellis, 2005; DMSS, 2012). However, it is also acknowledged that these approaches may be difficult for less confident children to engage in.

Children participating in the focus groups reported that the visual element of role play helped to promote their understanding of what constitutes healthy and unhealthy relationships through the recognition of violent and non-violent behaviours:

The thing with the acting thing it was kind of mixed, the parts I liked about it is the way they explained it and helped us learn the stages of happiness and anger but the

thing I didn't like about it was that it was in numbers but at the same time it did help us to know the stages. (Boy, School B, Group 2)

The affective elements of the drama and games appeared to enable children to recognise and gain better understanding of their own feelings:

I liked the games because they helped you to be active and at the same time they helped to understand about yourself and your feelings. (Boy, School B, Group 2)

In anti-bullying week we learnt ... we talked about who you should go to, what you should do, what you should do back and we just did some activities like that but the relationship workshop what we learn, we learnt a bit more about if we were in the scenario what would happen and what we should do by doing drama, which I think was really good because we felt how we would be if we were to be in this situation. (Girl, School B, Group 1)

These educational drama techniques can facilitate children's understanding by providing opportunities for children to 'step into someone else's shoes' (Bolton, 1992). These children described learning through experience by recognising and understanding how they 'felt' they might respond to the situations explored. Role play also has the capacity to raise children's self-esteem (Bolton, 1993) and these children appeared empowered through their acquisition of knowledge and skills to recognise early warning signs. Through their experience of role play and rehearsal, children felt better equipped to manage potentially harmful situations and here, it is the performative nature of learning that is key – children are learning through doing rather than through listening and writing:

I enjoyed the acting, it really helped us what was the right thing to do and what wasn't and what we could do if something was happening. (Girl, School A, Group 2)

They're showing examples. (Girl, School A, Group 1)

Well for example with drama, when we were actually go to perform something about an argument and red flags, it just helped me a lot in all the things that I had to know and what would you do. (Girl, School A, Group 1)

Creative methods such as drama and games can help children by engaging them in material that is relevant and meaningful to their own lives (Jackson, 1993). A sense of authenticity can also be enhanced when messages are delivered by those with relevant experience and as such, messages can be more impactful when delivered in this way, rather than through the simple transfer of knowledge:

I liked that they were thinking of things that could like affect us and in a way that we could understand like the games, I liked the secret game that was Chinese whispers and it kind of related to something that happens in real life like. (Girl, School B, Group 1)

It's something with the Charlie [scene] because that's someone that actually came in rather than someone just saying the words, it kind of made it more, I don't know how to explain it, like clearer. It's like we're hearing from someone who actually experienced it. (Girl, School C, Group 2)

However, for authenticity to be achieved, material needs to be recognisable and plausible (Stanley et al., 2015). In one activity, children were introduced to a fictional character, a 10-year-old girl called Charlie played by the female facilitator. Charlie described feeling pressure to send a photo of her private parts to her male friend Mo, and children were then invited to give Charlie some advice about what she might do. However, children who were unfamiliar with this scenario did not appear to accept this situation as credible or relatable to children their age:

Nicola: *So, what was it that surprised you then?*

Sarah: *The bit where Mo asked Charlie to send a picture of her private parts.*

Nicola: *I see, because it was shocking?*

Sarah: *Yeah, I think they were the same age as us and it's a bit inappropriate for a ten-year-old to be sending a picture of her private parts to another ten-year-old.*

Nicola: *Ok, so have you not heard of that happening within your own, among children your age?*

Aditi: *I've seen it in a newspaper about a man who's quite old and his girlfriend asked him to do it. I don't mind if older people do it 'cause it's their problem, but I was quite shocked that Charlie's only ten or eleven, and the fact that they have phones as well. I mean I have my 'phone but I only have it to contact my parents and they were using it in a different way. (Girl, School B, Group 1)*

(Sarah and Aditi: Girls, School B, Group 1)

As noted above, these methods may be difficult for some children to engage in and not all children were confident with performing. Although most children enjoyed participating in the drama, some children described how an increase in non-participative drama performed by the facilitators would be a more effective means of learning:

I think it was actually them acting because usually for example me, I'm not really good at acting 'cause me obviously I'm not very good. (Boy, School B, Group2)

*I think **they** could do much more of the acting 'cause I remember, I think they could do much more acting and much more information. (Boy, School A, Group 2)*

As such, children who are less confident or unused to live performance may benefit from other more familiar methods, such as through discussion:

That just kind of made it boring because we're just learning about one thing 'cause healthy relationships isn't just about acting and drama, it's about learning and getting to say your own opinions and your own ideas. (Girl, School B, Group1)

These comments highlight the challenges of delivering material which suit a range of learning preferences. Findings from other evaluations of programmes report drama as a popular method among young people, whilst others felt uncomfortable (CRG Research, 2009), and although boys may favour the active elements of programmes, girls may prefer sitting and talking (Stanley, Ellis and Bell, 2011). Furthermore, for children who have experienced abuse, there may be a potential risk of re-enactment in programmes which draw on drama and participative methods (Fox et al., 2014). However, as described above, most children in this study valued learning through drama, and active participation and critical reflection had the effect of promoting social learning within the peer group. Discussing issues in small groups and among the whole class provided children with the opportunity to share ideas and learn from each other, and although some children may have had limited experience of this approach, it is one they clearly valued:

I also liked the idea how they asked other people's opinions, like some of the things I didn't think of like when [a boy] said that if Charlie was to give the picture it would have used the picture to threat. I didn't even think of that, so it's good to listen to other people's opinions. (Girl, School B, Group1)

I liked doing the group discussion because you get a chance to share your answers with other people. (Boy, School B, Group 2)

Reflection through discussion is a key feature of educational drama (McNaughton, 2014) and by giving children time and space for discussion, the girl cited above describes how her understanding of the choices presented in one particular scenario had been enhanced.

The potential for drama to enable the development of positive relationships between participants (Bolton, 1993) is evident through focus group discussions where some children described how they were able to form better relationships with their peers by having

opportunities to interact with each other. One boy quoted below described how he had made new friends as a result of the programme:

It's a good thing because we get to interact with each other more and like what other people like and what they don't like and we could speak to them more about the lesson and what they thought about it. (Boy, School B, Group 2)

I like when people act and then, 'cause I was acting with all my friends and other people who were not my friends, but then now they are. (Boy, School C, Group 1)

However, some children found the group work challenging, and these methods required a level of skills that some children did not possess. This sometimes resulted in sessions that were noisy and distracting, which appeared to spoil the experience for some children:

When we were doing the drama everybody was like... oo, oo, oo (said in a silly voice) ...it's kind of annoying when everybody was crowding around us. (Girl, School A, Group 1)

I was trying my best to concentrate but most of the groups, especially my group, were shouting. (Boy, School B, Group2)

One activity in particular stimulated diverse opinions among the whole class group and required a good level of discussion and listening skills. This task required children to place cards with various job roles (i.e. Doctor, Hairdresser, Chef) then relationship types (i.e. husband/wife) in order of their perceived power and this was followed by a discussion of gender equality and equality within relationships. This is a complex and sensitive topic and one that many children had views about that they wanted to put across. However, some children lacked the communication skills necessary for the task, leading to discussions which were sometimes emotive and challenging. One girl described the confrontation she experienced during this task:

- Kaylee: *I liked ordering them [the cards] in their places with my friend because it makes me feel like I'm doing something good, and that it was ok when everybody said 'No, that's the wrong place!' because that is an opinion but I don't think this and I said it out loud [said in a very quiet voice]*
- Nicola: *You don't think they should have said it out loud?*
- Kaylee: *Yeah*
- Nicola: *Why do you think they shouldn't have said it out loud?*
- Kaylee: *Because if they say it out loud, they'll make me feel like I'm doing something wrong and everybody wants me to stop.*

(Kaylee: Girl, School B, Group1)

The gendered dynamic within the group could have contributed to children's disparate opinions during this task and discussions often reflected wider stereotypical gender norms (Renold, 2000; 2005). The facilitators were at times able to skilfully utilise the gender dynamic to challenge attitudes and opinions, therefore making learning directly relevant for the children in a safe and supportive manner. However, in order for learning to be effective, it is essential that gendered power dynamics within the group are not reinforced during these debates, for example boys shouting girls down and vice versa, as one girl described:

When we were doing the power line one girl... she said that she thinks that a mother should go to the top because they do more work than men, but the boys started to - just didn't put their hand up - they were just like yelling and everything. (Girl, School B, Group 1)

Whilst the methods used to deliver messages are an important means for learning, the skills of the facilitators to enable children to learn effectively, particularly during activities where children's skills are under developed, emerge as an equally important mechanism for children's learning and engagement in the material. At the same time, feminist discourses which clearly address gender equality and gendered power relations, particularly within the school setting where children learn to perform gender (Renold, 2005), have proved valuable

in the prevention of domestic violence (Flood et al., 2009; Lombard and Harris, 2017; Reed et al., 2010). This may be particularly relevant for interventions with young children in the primary school setting where messages need to be explicit and unambiguous in order to be understood (see further discussion below).

b. Facilitator characteristics

As noted above, children's engagement appeared to be as equally determined by the qualities of the facilitators as the method through which the learning occurred. For example, children reported that they valued facilitators who were inclusive and treated them with respect, qualities that reflect the values that the programme aims to convey:

I liked the way that [the female facilitator] was making everybody [included] maybe next time [she] gave us a task, she was the one for the water bottle task that said, 'let Kaylee have a go'. (Girl, School B, Group 1)

I did like them 'cause as I said before they were funny but that's not really the point, I think they were quite nice and they were helpful. (Girl, School B, Group 1)

Children talked of the value of participative approaches which enable them to voice their opinions and have people listen to them. Children felt strongly about having the opportunity to participate, and one of their main criticisms expressed during the focus group discussions was not being given the opportunity to contribute to all the various interactive tasks. As noted by CRG Research (2009), the effectiveness of these types of programmes is in part determined by the facilitators' ability to engage, manage and communicate with participants, and observations of the current programme suggested that overall children were keen to take part. However, the skills of facilitators to support group discussions and to ensure that children feel included and not ignored, particularly when children are committed to the tasks, emerged as an important factor in their engagement and learning:

When we answered a question, when you're choosing someone I found it a bit annoying when I don't get chosen, 'cause sometimes when I put my hand down and

then I put my hand back again, I forgot about what I thought before. So I found that bit annoying. And in class we're used to just put our hand up. (Girl, School B, Group 1)

Children also described the importance of facilitators being receptive to their questions which arose during discussions and answering their questions openly:

I think I got enough information and it was really engaging and it was easy to ask questions because they didn't give enough information so when we asked questions they gave a reasonable answer. (Boy, School B, Group 2).

The suggestion in this quote is that children value having some control over the content of discussions and level of information acquired. On the other hand, children were critical of having limited opportunities to contribute to the wider range of activities during the programme and described their dissatisfaction at not being selected for activities or to show their drama pieces:

We should all do it like, less children, so we all get a turn and then at the next group the other people get a turn as well. (Girl, School A, Group 1)

I did enjoy it but what I didn't enjoy was that not everyone got a go, I couldn't really blame [male facilitator] and [female facilitator] because there were thirty of us but if we had enough time maybe everyone could have a little small chance. (Boy, School B, Group 2)

Restrictions on the individual child's participation may be unavoidable and can arise from the size of groups and the limited time available in the school setting. However, the common theme identified in the extracts above that children value being treated as active learners may suggest that if children feel overlooked they are more likely to feel dissatisfied and therefore less engaged in their learning. Promoting children's learning through taking

an active interest in them, as well as ensuring that children who want to participate fully in the activities have the opportunity to do so, appears to be an important mechanism for impact. Opportunities for inclusion in all aspects of the programme may be enhanced by reducing the size of the groups, as suggested by some of the children, and might also be achieved by increasing the length of time available to children to explore these topics (see discussion under *Length of the programme*, below).

In addition, children were widely critical of the limited time available to them to prepare for an assembly presentation to their younger peers at the end of day two of the programme. The presentation task is built into the programme as a means of rolling programme messages out to other children in the school. This task is pre-planned and children are required to work in small groups to present one of five prescribed topics covered during the course of the programme. Children were given some say in how these topics were delivered, for example children were given the option of presenting their messages through short sketches, verbal presentations and/or through the visual use of posters. As the oldest children in the school, they described feeling a responsibility towards their younger peers to impart their newly acquired knowledge and children therefore appeared to take this task seriously. This was a complex task and the limited time available for the children to prepare, coupled with undeveloped group work skills, meant that preparation for the assembly, as observed during the study, was often noisy and fraught. As a result, children described feeling dissatisfied with the time spent preparing as well as with the assembly presentation itself:

We didn't have enough time to get ready to do the assembly...and we didn't have enough time to practice and when it came to practising we didn't know what to do.
(Girl, School B, Group 1)

I think some of them were like 'What? What are they speaking about, I don't understand... we are the year 6, we are the role models so they chose us to make that project so I feel like, I just want to give more information to them so they can understand. (Boy, School A, Group 2)

Two children, both girls at School B, described the facilitators' approach to supporting them in their assembly preparation as slightly too directive; these girls felt they were being told what to do and how to present the material as opposed to being facilitated to interpret and present the material in their own way:

He [the male facilitator] kept on stopping in the middle to tell us to do something else and it was really difficult 'cause we had to remember what we was writing and some people did a mistake in my group. (Girl, School B, Group 1)

For our group he said that we were doing Rights and he said that we had to write out everything...but we were spending too much time doing that. (Girl, School B, Group 1)

This tension may arise from the need for the programme to be delivered widely. As these messages are delivered to large numbers of younger children in schools, facilitators need to ensure that the correct messages are going out to younger children - the teacher in School C understood that, if this task was left to the children, messages could be 'lost in translation'. As a consequence of time pressures and the need to ensure the correct messages are widely heard by younger children, this task was usually rushed, and this was noted during the observations of these tasks. Furthermore, three girls in School B reported that some children in their class had been feeling anxious about the assembly presentation from the start of the programme:

I think it was a bit like shocking like 'Oh', 'cause some people might not have wanted to do it, 'cause [male facilitator] and [female facilitator] should have said we will be doing an assembly later on, but it's only for the people that feel like they want to do it. (Girl, School B, Group 1)

Some people didn't want to do it in my group, two people didn't want to do it, they were crying - a girl and a boy...and when he first said we were doing an assembly I

didn't feel happy because I've been shy before in assembly, and many people did feel shy too. (Girl, School B, Group 1)

I didn't want to do it. (Girl, School B, Group 3)

These children were distressed about this task and withdrew themselves from it, and it is feasible that this had also affected their engagement with the programme as a whole. Children in School B may be less experienced in presenting their work in this way, or may have resisted programme messages, causing a level of anxiety when it came to presenting the material that was not evident in children at the other schools. These criticisms emphasise power imbalances and lack of control for children in a programme designed by adults. Children's level of participation in this aspect of the programme was controlled by adults and a lack of agency over what and how topics were delivered to younger peers appeared to contribute to some children's dissatisfaction. The findings presented above suggest that when facilitators are prepared to allow children more control and ownerships of the process, when adults take an active interest in them, are receptive to their questions and provide opportunities for active participation, children can engage more fully.

Programme structure and process

a. Peer group setting

Like other school-based programmes, this programme is delivered to classes of children in mixed sex groups, meaning that the manner in which children normally learn in school is reflected in the configuration of the programme. Working in a mixed sex peer group setting gave children the opportunity to interact with one another and to share their ideas, as well as providing opportunities for facilitators to raise awareness about gender dynamics. In addition, children in School B described how learning the programmes values of respectful relationships collectively, had led to better behaviour among the group as a whole:

Ethan: *I think it helped Year 6 because normally it wasn't 100% but normally we only talk about subjects like I might say 'messy' and then everybody goes crazy and start shouting but this time there was*

a little bit of noise but I think it really helped us become mature and it just I think everyone in the class realise it's time for them to grow up and stop all the silly shouting and messing about.

Jacob: *I agree with Ethan, like for example, when someone shouts out 'that was fun', everyone starts screaming and shouting and once, I'd seen (a teacher) tell them to stop they don't listen, but like on the Monday after the healthy relationships, I think over the weekend everyone changed, cause some people they tried to make commotion but no one listened they just carried on with their work.*

(Ethan and Jacob: Boys, School B, Group2)

Learning together also meant that children were able to remind each other what they had learned once the programme ended:

Nicola: *And what do you think you would do as a result of what you've learned?*

Erina: *I'm not sure.*

Nicola: *Ok.*

Hailey: *I think I would tell someone, like if something, like anything dangerous happened, like I understand that I can get support from other places. (Girls, School C, Group 2)*

(Erina and Hailey, Girls, School C, Group 2)

However, as noted above, the disadvantages of learning in the peer group were that tasks could sometimes become noisy and disordered, leading children to suggest that smaller groups of just '*fifteen children at a time*' (Girl, School A), would be more advantageous.

Children most commonly stated a preference for learning in mixed-sex groups. Among the reasons given for this were that as relationships exist mutually, it is both relevant and appropriate for boys and girls to learn together:

I think that we should do it altogether because since we're learning about relationships it's good to do it together. (Girl, School B, Group 1)

It was also considered that boys and girls worked better when they were together:

I think boys and girls should be together because if we were separate, for one, some of the teachers think that the boys would mess around, not all but the majority and the girls won't work together, they'll just be bossing everyone around. (Girl, School B, Group 3)

Only three boys, all from School B, advocated single sex groups, stating it would allow them to talk more freely, as boys considered that girls' lacked discretion and this was problematic for them:

What I'm trying to say is that the boys trust the boys more than they trust the girls. That's why I think because about a quarter of the class didn't really say anything in lessons. (Boy, School B, Group 2)

One boy in this group described the potential risk of offending some girls in the group, for example, if girlfriends are in the same class, and therefore thought that single sex groups would be easier to discuss gender specific issues:

Samuel: *I wanted to do with the boys separate from the girls 'cause if a girl finds out about something they might get...*

Nicola: *Like what? If the girl finds out about what?*

Samuel: *About a secret relationship, they might get angry. (Boy, School B, Group 2)*

Although none of the girls advocated single sex groups, where they had criticisms of mixed groups, these focussed on boys' behaviour which at times they saw as uncooperative and distracting. From the following accounts, it is unclear whether these boys were attempting

to resist adult authority by ignoring adult requests to 'put your hand down', or if they were performing certain gendered identities associated with being boys (Renold, 2005):

They kind of acted silly and that's why and some people did it on purpose like when [the male facilitator] said please put your hand down they kind of did it on purpose.
(Girl, School B, Group 1)

'Cause I remember at one point when [the male facilitator] said 'someone's talking, can you put your hand down' ...I remember some boys went like that [puts hand in air] to annoy [the male facilitator] and [the female facilitator] and I didn't think it was right. (Girl, School B, Group 1)

One boy pointed out the benefits of delivering the programme in both mixed and single sex groups, suggesting that an element of flexibility would enable the programme to be more responsive to their needs. For example, learning about each other's boundaries in relation to the Personal Space task was considered to be important to learn altogether:

I think separately because if the boys do it separately they'll get a chance to express themselves and tell secrets, but some of the girls they can tell secrets and if the boys did it together it would be like tense to say it. And like with the personal space activity, it would be better at that time, it would be better if it was boys and girls 'cause you'll know who wants this amount of personal space, because with boys it's just natural and with girls it's natural as well. Between boys and girls together, you need to know the amount of personal space. (Boy, School B, Group 2)

b. Length of the programme

Several children talked about wanting more time on the project, either because, 'we could have learnt a bit more' or because, 'I liked doing it' implying that children saw the programme as useful and worthwhile and wanted the opportunity to continue learning. Similar comments are reported in other programme evaluations (CRG Research, 2009; DMSS, 2012; Hale et al., 2012; Maxwell et al., 2010; Reid Howie Associates, 2002). For example, in their evaluation of a programme for primary school children, Hale et al. (2012)

reported one girl who commented, *'We should have had [the programme] from the start of the year until the end of the year, and that would actually be more fun'* (p43).

One girl suggested that the programme should be *'at least a week 'cause that would have got us thinking and it would have made us think that relationships are important'* (Girl, School B) suggesting that dedicating more time would convey a stronger message about the significance of the work. As discussed earlier, where they had criticisms, children talked about not having the opportunity to take part in all the activities, as well as not having enough time to prepare for the assembly presentation.

The intensity of the learning was commented on by one boy who suggested:

'it would be better to have more than two days to have five days, a week, not because to waste learning time, because it was hard to memorise everything because we were doing four tasks in an hour, so we don't get enough time'. (Boy, School B, Group 2)

Only one boy talked about the benefits of intensive learning over two days:

It's kind of engrained into my head, two days of doing around the same subject, it's kind of got it stuck in my head, it's there. (Boy, School C, Group1)

Most children who commented on this aspect of the programme however reported a preference for the programme to be longer. The boy's point above about the positive aspects of intensive learning was reaffirmed by one facilitator (discussed in the next chapter), although the important issue may be to tailor the programme to suit the individual needs of children and schools.

c. *Who should deliver?*

There are ongoing debates within the literature regarding who is best placed to deliver programmes in schools (CRG Research, 2009; Ellis, 2006; Fox et al., 2014; Hale et al., 2012; Stanley et al., 2015). The current programme is delivered by one male and one female

facilitator, therefore providing opportunities to model gender equity and positive relations throughout the programme. However, the gender of the facilitator was not explicitly identified by the children as a contributing factor in their engagement with the programme. Rather, children's engagement appeared to be determined by the qualities of those facilitators and their ability to form positive connections with the children. As discussed above, these qualities focussed on being 'nice' and 'helpful' to children by treating them with respect, answering children's questions and making children feel they were listened to, as well as being able to manage the group and gender dynamic and demonstrating how to conduct respectful relationships. Most of the children who expressed a view on who should deliver the programme stated that external facilitators would be their preferred choice. On the one hand, this is because children associated the facilitators with being 'more fun' as they engaged children through the use of more innovative and creative methods as opposed to the more traditional 'boring' methods of teaching that children may be used to:

I feel it was a bit more fun to have people come in and talking 'cause if it was a teacher, no offence to my teacher, but it would just seem like a normal lesson 'cause [in] a normal teacher's teaching you, but [then] other people come in and just like 'Ok, what's all this about?'. (Boy, School C, Group 1)

Plus teachers won't teach us how you teach us, like they won't actually draw like make us do these, they would just talk about it and then the sessions over and it would be boring. But this way it's done so you understand more, because when you're in a boring session you just want to day dream but then the more fun it is, the more you don't want to day dream. (Girl, School C, Group 2)

Children also like to feel special and they described how having visitors helped children to 'pay attention' by breaking through the ordinariness of school life:

I like it that other people coming in because it feels like if were the only people learning in the school. (Boy, School C, Group 1)

If it's just our teacher teaching us, it would still feel like other teachers are teaching other classes too and we want to be special and you feel it's just a normal lesson and people wouldn't pay attention. (Boy, School C, Group 1)

On the other hand, children described the importance of educators having relevant experience and knowledge when delivering this material and teachers were felt to lack this level of expertise:

I think it would be good if other people came in to teach us because maybe they may have more experience than the teacher. (Girl, School B, Group 1)

She like wouldn't know all the things like the PANTs and that bit (powerlines)...and [male facilitator] and [female facilitator] are like professionals at it. (Girl, School B, Group 3)

A small number of children, all from the Catholic school (School B), favoured their teacher to deliver the work. Their comments were based around having positive relationships with their class teacher, although notably their teacher had been in post for just four weeks at the time of the programme. Prior to this, these children had a succession of teachers which perhaps contributed to the children's lack of confidence in teaching staff generally:

My teacher because that makes me feel more comfortable, because than people that I don't really know is coming to teach us, but our teacher we're really used to her now and I feel more comfortable with my teacher. (Girl, School B, Group 1)

I would choose my teacher because although I would trust people outside the school, I don't really trust them...because I don't really know them. And yes, [the head teacher] may trust them, but I don't always trust them. So I prefer my teacher because I know her better and she knows me better, and I just feel more safe and comfortable talking to [my teacher] other than someone like [the male facilitator]

and [the female facilitator] coming in and I've never met them before. (Girl, School B, Group 1)

I think that [the male facilitator] and [the female facilitator] shouldn't have come because it would be awkward to have like new people because at first you don't know how their reactions are, they could be strict. But with, I think with our teacher, that we've been here I think after five weeks, two weeks or something you'll get to know them and interact more. (Boy, School B, Group 3)

These comments emphasise the value that children place on having relationships with adults they trust and feel comfortable with, particularly when discussing complex and sensitive topics. The skills of facilitators to create and maintain a safe and trusting environment in which to discuss these topics are therefore essential. This might be achieved by providing a clear statement of privacy and confidentiality at the start of the programme and reminding children of these boundaries during the course of the programme.

One girl recognised that teachers would be better positioned to present material over a longer period of time and this would enable topics to be integrated better into the school curriculum. This suggests that children would value the opportunity for programme messages to be repeated and sustained over time:

We've known our teacher for a while now and also if she did do it, then we could have like more time to have it than just the two days. We could have like a week on it, but we can also learn at the same time, like have three lessons on it and then two hour lessons on other work. (Girl, School B, Group 3)

The benefit of co-delivery between the facilitators and teachers was identified and described by three of the children:

I think all of them 'cause like you can have all of them but they can like for one day the teacher can say something and then [male facilitator] and [female facilitator]

'cause they might say different things that we might not know. (Boy, School B, Group 3)

I don't like it when there's people from other companies come in to tell us, like basically it's them taking the teacher's job like teaching us. It was a bit uncomfortable when they first came, but I think I'd really like it if my teacher and the company Tender would do it, like both. (Boy, School C, Group 1)

I think the teacher can maybe like help and like, kind of like, a TA kind of help the children. When we were doing some of the work, I saw that some people were kind of, didn't understand it, so they kept asking [male facilitator] and [female facilitator] but they were with another group doing different things. So I think maybe it would be helpful if [the teacher] maybe came in and helped. (Girl, School B, Group 1)

This also relates to the teacher's role in supporting the facilitators. Class teachers or teaching assistants were present in the schools during the programme delivery although their level of participation varied. Class teachers in Schools A and C, sat among the children and sometimes joined in with some of the activities. In School B, the teacher stayed in the classroom, but at a distance from the group. The teacher explained this was so that children were not inhibited by her presence. However, as the quote above suggests, it may have been more helpful if a more hands-on approach was adopted. Teachers' observations of the programme, however, meant that they too experienced the programme in a similar way to the children and also had the opportunity to learn about the topics alongside the children. In all the schools, teachers helped manage children's behaviour and in one or two instances, helped to support children if they needed to leave the room for any reason.

This suggests that a joint approach between teachers and external facilitators might serve to take full advantage of the strengths of each approach; external facilitators would bring a level of expertise and authority as well as more creative teaching methods, whereas children might benefit from the established relationship they have with their teachers. This approach would also help the work to become integrated in schools and conveys a strong message that it is an important aspect of children's learning.

Programme impact

Improved knowledge and awareness

An increase in children's awareness and knowledge of the topics covered by the programme was the most common outcome when children participating in the focus groups were asked to reflect on what they thought they had learnt and how the programme had helped them. These are considered here under the themes that emerged from their responses.

a. Help seeking

A key aim of this and other programmes for children, for example, the NSPCC's Speak Out Stay Safe programme for primary school children in the UK (www.learning.nspcc.org.uk/services/speak-out-stay-safe), is to increase children's knowledge of help seeking strategies and sources of support. This was a topic that nearly half of the 29 children participating in the focus groups identified as an area where their knowledge had increased. Those children were all from School A or School C, comprising both boys (n=6) and girls (n=7) with five of the eleven children from School A, and all eight children from School C highlighting this area of their learning. None of the children in School B, the Catholic faith school, mentioned help seeking as an area where their learning had been enhanced; children in this school were more likely to reflect on their learning in relation to increased understanding of sexual abuse and sexual bullying, and these topics are discussed further below. For children in Schools A and C, increased awareness in help seeking is an important achievement as those children appeared, first, to understand that they would be supported if they sought help, and second, were able to recall a number of sources where they could seek help including their parents, trusted adults, teachers, friends and the Police, with ChildLine being the most frequently mentioned, possibly due to its emphasis on discretion and confidentiality:

Taylor: *The Charlie thing was different because I didn't really know what I'd do if that happened to me and if they did, I'd just keep it a secret and I wouldn't tell anyone.*

Nicola: *And has that changed at all?*

Taylor: *Yeah.*

Nicola: *Yeah, what do you think you might do now if that happened to you?*

Taylor: *I'd tell my mum and my dad or call the Police or ChildLine.*

(Taylor: Boy, School C, Group 1)

Even where children weren't readily able to recall the various sources of support made known to them, the concept of the Support Tree (where branches on a drawing indicated different people or places) was easily recalled and this left children with the view that *'there were so many ways'* that they could get support. This is a valuable outcome in relation to children's affective learning since promoting attitudes which challenge the concealment of abusive relationships and encouraging positive beliefs towards help seeking, was an area of learning recognised by this particular group of children immediately following the programme (the children's focus group discussions took place one week after the programme). These findings suggest that programme messages on positive attitudes towards help seeking appear to have been effective for both boys and girls.

However, the opportunity for help seeking to be a completely confidential process was questioned by one of the girls at School A. The following extract exposes this girl's understanding of what might happen if she called ChildLine, in view of the message she had heard during the programme. The observation notes below (see Observation notes – School A) illustrate the extent to which facilitators described ChildLine as a confidential service. Although facilitators initially described ChildLine as 'a confidential telephone service', when children questioned the degree to which confidentiality was guaranteed, facilitators confirmed that confidentiality may not necessarily be ensured, for example, *'If there is an issue with your parents then ChildLine would want to intervene to make sure you're safe'*. While the ChildLine service promises confidentiality, although with some exceptions (www.childline.org.uk/about/confidentiality-promise), this girl did not accept that she could seek support without negative consequences:

Abigail: *Some people say, as they say, that you can call ChildLine but actually, so let's say if my, like if you call ChildLine your parents might know and you can get into trouble, that's the thing.*

- Nicola: *Ok, the number for ChildLine doesn't come up on any phone bill.*
- Abigail: *Miss, I know, but when [male facilitator) and [female facilitator) said 'oh em, they might speak to your mum' or something that's when you can get into trouble.*
- Jasmine: *No, no, no...*
- Abigail: *Yes, you can. You can get into trouble.*

(Abigail and Jasmine: Girls, School A, Group 2)

Being permitted to speak out and challenge adult authority (such as that of a parent) is a complex concept for children and is counter to societal norms about trusting adults and keeping secrets (Briggs, 1991; Briggs and Hawkins, 1994; Tutty, 2014). Understanding that sometimes they may need to speak out and seek support, and that it is permissible to do so, is a difficult concept for children to learn and one that this girl appeared unable to recognise. Observations of programme delivery across all three schools suggested that the core message around children being permitted to break secrets that make them feel uncomfortable or unsafe was perhaps not made explicit enough during the programme and particularly during the task in which the concept of secrets was predominantly addressed - a game in which a secret whisper was passed around the group. For example, in the following observations from School C, the Secrets game is played and the facilitator engages the children in a discussion about how secrets makes them feel and how they can be misconstrued:

Observation notes – School C

Day 2: Secrets (10.11 – 10.27am)

MF= male facilitator, FF = female facilitator, FC= female child, MC=male child

MF: *If you don't communicate effectively then what someone is told can be very different*

MC: *The message could get muddled up and get to a lot of people*

MF: *And the message could be wrong*

MF makes the point that people can also choose to change secrets.

FF: *There are three different types of secrets 1- great secrets, such as surprise birthday parties, 2- little secrets that are a little embarrassing like, I like chocolate but I don't like chocolate cake, 3- then things that upset, frighten or worry you and can be burning secrets*

FC: *When you say secrets that frighten you, do you mean like heights?*

FF: *No, I mean like abuse, not like when I lie in my bed I think there's a monster under it.*

Here (at 10.27am) the teacher interrupts and says '*Can I pause please for break?*' The teacher has interrupted here at what seems to be a crucial point - this would have been a good opportunity to discuss the uncertainties that children have about secrets as indicated by the girl's question about heights. After the break, I noted this conversation is not revisited.

As discussed above under *Programme Content*, two girls in School A, including *Abigail* quoted in the extract above, were critical of the lack of depth of information provided, particularly around the consequences of seeking help. This emphasises the point that insufficient information can leave children feeling sceptical about the consequences of help seeking; children need to hear strong and clear messages so they feel confident that they have accurate and sufficient knowledge to draw on. This might be better achieved by allocating sufficient time in the programme to allow children to explore areas where they show a lack of certainty, as well as facilitators being receptive towards those children showing an interest in learning more about specific topics.

This point is also demonstrable from the following observation which took place at School A, at the start of Day 2. Increased clarity around what would happen if they called ChildLine was important for these children and, as described above, their understanding around confidentiality appears to be an important factor on the issue of seeking support. These observations also illustrate the lack of opportunity available during the programme to have all their questions answered adequately:

Observation notes – School A

Day 2 - Task 2: Support tree (9.32am - 9.48am)

C = child, MF = male facilitator, FF = female facilitator

The female facilitator asks children where they could go for support. One child says 'ChildLine'. The facilitators speak a little bit about ChildLine i.e. '*it's a confidential telephone service*'. Some children offer other sources of support i.e. 'Mum and Dad' and 'Senior Leaderships team'. Some children are keen to talk more about ChildLine:

C: *Is it true ChildLine can take away your parents?*

MF: *If there is an issue with your parents then ChildLine would want to intervene to make sure you're safe.*

C: *If your parents go to ChildLine would your parents go to prison?*

MF: *No, ChildLine is just for children – there are other places that adults can go to for help.*

Children offer other sources of support and MF stresses the importance of talking to an adult as well, *‘as friends might not be able to give the best advice’*

C: *If you tell ChildLine or [Head Teacher] they might say ‘I have to tell your parents’.*

MF: *You have a right to feel safe so ChildLine would be interested in making sure the child is OK.*

FF: *It’s better that school deals with an incident than dealing with it yourself.*

MF: *All schools have a safeguarding policy and part of that is confidentiality and the teacher can only pass information to those who need to know. It’s called data protection. They’re not allowed to talk to anyone in the staffroom about it.*

(Teacher is marking work)

FF: *If a teacher had to break confidentiality i.e. if there’s immediate danger, i.e. a fight, then they would have to call the Police.*

C: *But what if you’re outside and the person has a gun and they keep you hostage as well?*

FF: *That sounds extreme and you would need to get to a safe place.*

C: *What if...*

FF: (Laughs) *Ok we’re going to move on, there are lots of what if’s...*

The boy looks like he’s really listening and wants more answers as he’s leaning forward and looks as though he still wants to ask questions.

Similar discussions took place in School C, where children were keen to understand the consequences of contacting ChildLine and sought further reassurance around confidentiality. These observations took place in School C, after morning break on Day 2:

Observation notes – School C

Day 2 - Support tree (10.45am – 10.55am)

FF = female facilitator

FF: *Who would we talk to if we were worried?*

(Children offer their ideas i.e. *‘Lunch ladies’, ‘Friends’, ‘School staff’*)

Boy: *ChildLine.*

FF: *Yes, ChildLine is free, or you can speak to them on line and it’s confidential. They would only tell someone if they thought you were in immediate danger.*

Girl: *I thought when they came in they said they don’t have to tell anyone?*

FF: *I have a friend who works for ChildLine and they won’t make you but will say how important it is to talk to someone.*

The children ask questions here about what actually happens when they ring ChildLine and this is an issue that has cropped up in every school – it therefore seems that it would be helpful for children if space were given here to talk more about this issue, which is clearly important to them to understand.

As such, this area of the programme may be strengthened by providing children with real opportunities to explore what might happen if they called ChildLine, for example through role play, or video, rather than through discussion alone. As discussed above, children value being treated as thoughtful, active learners and need opportunities to explore complex scenarios, such as seeking help by speaking out against adults, in full rather than being given simplistic messages around who they can tell.

b. Sexual abuse

Staying safe from sexual abuse is a topic addressed on Day 1 of the programme, through promoting children's understanding of acceptable and unacceptable touch, as well as increasing their awareness of personal space. The NSPCC underwear rule (P.A.N.T.S)¹⁷ was also introduced on Day 1 during the session on sexual abuse to further reinforce these messages, and information on how to disclose sexual abuse was included. Alongside their learning around help seeking discussed above, this was another common topic that children commented on in the focus groups with half of the 29 children across the three schools identifying sexual abuse as an area where their understanding had increased. Girls more commonly referred to this topic in relation to their learning than boys, with 10 girls and 4 boys identifying this area. The NSPCC underwear rule was frequently recounted, with 5 girls and 3 boys across the schools reciting the rule. This suggests that the P.A.N.T.S acronym was highly memorable for the children:

Taylor: *They were talking about the PANTS rule and that if someone asks you that if to show pictures of the private parts say private means private, always remember no means no, tell an adult and speak up.*

Nicola: *So you've remembered all of that, did you know that before?*

Taylor: *No.*

¹⁷ The NSPCC underwear rule (P.A.N.T.S): Privates are private, Always remember your body belongs to you, No means no, Talk about secrets that upset you, Speak up, someone can help

(Taylor: Boy, School C, Group 1)

A further 6 children, including 3 girls and 1 boy from School B, and 2 girls from School C, referred to an increase in their knowledge around the themes of inappropriate touch and personal space:

Anything can be inappropriate to touch even your face, if someone touches your face and you don't like it you just have to say 'stop I don't want you to touch me, I need my personal space'. I enjoyed the personal space thing because you should get to choose how much personal space you want. (Girl, School B, Group 1)

They told me like where you should touch and where you shouldn't touch and like, if like anyone ever touched you there, you could get help from these people. (Girl, School C, Group 2)

None of the children from School A talked about the key topics of inappropriate touch or personal space as part of their learning. However, as the following observation highlights, children in School A may have been affected by the classroom environment during the time in which this material was addressed.

Observation notes – School A

Day 1- Task 6: Personal Space (11.55am - 12.07pm)

MF= male facilitator, FF= female facilitator

The children are told to get into pairs and to stand opposite each other in a line. The children stood on one side are told to walk slowly towards their partner and the partners have to say 'stop' when the other comes too close for comfort. One child called out 'stop' when the task had just started and partner took only one step. Other children are laughing at this.

MF and FF put hands in air (to get children to quieten down) and the teacher tells children to listen.

Task continued and children called out 'stop' at various intervals.

Then the class sat down for a whole class discussion.

It's nearly lunch time and the class seem fidgety and lack attention. It's also still very hot and the sun is shining right into the classroom. FF asks children why we might say 'stop' if someone comes too close; one child says 'it's harassment if someone comes too close'.

This discussion doesn't really take off and the group are getting more fidgety and not paying much attention. Other children in the school are playing in the playground and passing by the classroom door in the corridor.

FF then starts to move on to the next task but the teacher says it's lunch time now. FF wasn't aware it was lunchtime and apologised to the children and said they would do the next task after lunch.

This suggests that environmental factors, and time of day, may need to be better considered when delivering these programmes to children in schools.

Although none of the participating children from School A specifically mentioned the themes of inappropriate touch and personal space in relation to their learning on sexual abuse awareness, children from this school did easily recall the P.A.N.T.S rule, as outlined above. As half of the children who took part in the focus groups across all three schools referred to the topic of sexual abuse in relation to what they had learned shortly after the programme, this is a notable outcome. Gender differences were evident with more girls commenting on an increase in their knowledge in this area with 63% (n=10/16) of the girls identifying this area compared to 30% (n=4/13) of the boys. Findings suggest that these children felt better equipped with the knowledge and language to recognise and stay safe from sexual abuse, and positive attitudes, particularly among girls, in relation to increased confidence and empowerment around appropriate physical boundaries, appear to have been developed.

In addition, three children at School A, one boy and two girls, talked about how the programme had reinforced earlier learning in school around sexual abuse prevention. These children recalled a previous visit from ChildLine to their school and talked about how the programme had served to remind them about these earlier messages as well as the availability of the ChildLine telephone service:

Beena: *Friend or if it's bullying you can call ChildLine 0800 1111.*

Nicola: *Very good. Did you know that number before?*

Beena: *I learnt about it when ChildLine came to my school.*

(Beena: Girl, School A, Group 1)

I just want to say thank you because they reminded us, we're in year 5 now, it's like one year we could have done anything but they literally just reminded of us everything that could happen but could call ChildLine, and yeah, so I'm happy about this. (Boy, School A, Group 2)

However, as noted above, strengthening children's understanding may be more effective if messages are clear and consistent with what children have already learnt and if children are given the opportunity to expand on their prior knowledge.

c. Peer pressure and sexual bullying

Increasing children's awareness of peer pressure and sexual bullying is a key programme outcome and this is closely related to the broader topic of sexual abuse discussed above. This topic is mainly explored through a scenario in which the female facilitator performs the role of a 10-year-old girl called Charlie, who tells of feeling pressured by her friend Mo to send him a picture of her private parts. The programme further encourages children to recognise different forms of pressure through an activity where children volunteer to enact various strategies, for example, flattery or blackmail, to persuade a classmate to give them a bottle of water. Programme outcomes also relate to promoting affective change by developing children's empathy, presumably so that they can recognise when others may be feeling pressured.

This is another common topic that half of the 29 participating children mentioned in relation to their increased understanding and those children were spread proportionally across the three schools, with more girls commenting on this topic (n=10/16) compared to the boys (n=4/13). These were mostly the same girls who had commented on the wider topic of sexual abuse discussed above. All the children who commented on this topic expressed support for Charlie by recognising that this was something that she did not want to do, and therefore she shouldn't do it. One boy identified this as a form of sexual bullying and linked this with his new knowledge of the previous topic on sexual abuse:

Remember like when Charlie came in and this guy called Sam or something told him to send a picture of his privates....the message means that your own body is to yourself so you can't send, like pictures around you. (Boy, School A, Group 2)

That this boy was able to make connections between different concepts addressed in the programme feeds into the discussion around how the programme is structured, for example, if concepts are delivered to children over a series of disparate sessions, these connections may not be made so easily.

All the children who commented during the focus groups were confident that Charlie should resist by not sending the photo and this was also largely based on their perception that there could be negative repercussions, for example that the photo might be shared more widely:

I learnt that if someone asks, even if you know them, if someone asks you to send a picture of your private parts, straight away you just have to say 'no', because if you do, something bad could happen. (Girl, School B, Group 1)

Two children, a boy and a girl, both from School C, described how they would not have known how to deal with this scenario prior to the programme, but felt more confident as a result of the programme about what to do if they were faced with this situation:

And plus I thought the Charlie thing would stick out too because that's like full of the bad things that could happen to you, in that situation you wouldn't know what to do, but now you've taught us this, we understand that it's bad and that we shouldn't do it. (Girl, School C, Group 2)

However, as discussed above under *Programme Content*, eight children participating in the focus groups were resistant to this material, describing feelings of discomfort when exploring topics relating to sexual themes.

One girl felt that the scenario lacked credibility stating that it was *'inappropriate for a ten-year-old to be sending a picture of her private parts to another ten-year-old'*. In addition, two children at School A reported that they were unfamiliar with this type of scenario and that this left them feeling 'confused' about the purpose of the material:

Hesam: *Yeah I was a bit confused when she came and she was like... Sam told me to take a picture of private part. I was confused, why would anyone just want to do that?*

Jasmine: *Why would anyone want to do that?*

Hesam: *...I was like, why would someone want a picture of someone's private parts?*

(Hesam and Jasmine: Boy and Girl, School A, Group2)

This suggests that children would benefit from more transparency around the context of sending explicit images and how this could relate to them feeling pressurised. However, this also links in with the point made earlier that although children may feel uncomfortable, without some level of discomfort when learning about 'sensitive' issues, learning may not be as effective (Tutty, 2014).

Only two girls, from Schools B and C, explicitly commented on how the programme had helped them to recognise different forms of peer pressure:

I didn't really know there are so many ways to pressure someone into doing something and like getting their way. (Girl, School C, Group 2)

However, four children from across Schools B and C appeared to misunderstand the aim of the water bottle activity where different forms of pressure, such as making threats, were demonstrated:

When we were playing the game when someone's in the middle and they had the water bottle, I didn't really understand that 'cause I didn't know why, because sometimes when you're angry you calm down, but when you have a fight over something you don't always get your way, and I didn't really understand what we were doing about it. (Girl, School B, Group 3)

As such, the purpose of this pressure activity may need to be more explicit, so children make a clear link between the activity and the message around different forms of persuasion. In addition, the following observations suggest that children at School B felt frustrated at the lack of opportunity to participate, and therefore withdrew from the task. As noted earlier, a lack of opportunity to participate in activities was an aspect of the programme that children were critical of.

Observation notes – School B

Day 2- Task 3: Pressure Bottle (10.51am – 11.08am)

MF= male facilitator, FF= female facilitator

FF chooses a girl and whispers a type of pressure to her. The girl acts out 'flattery' with confidence. Next, other children acted out 'guilt', 'threats', 'bullying'.

The children are all anxious to be picked to act out the pressure type and are getting frustrated when they don't get picked.

MF: *We can't let everyone have a go, we won't give into anyone who makes those noises.*

During the group discussion that followed, MF begins by asking the girl who was being pressurised by the other children what it was like to be in the middle and I notice that during this group chat the children are withdrawing a little and some are slouching.

In School C, children's lack of connection to the task could be a result of a misunderstanding around the purpose of the task, and a lack of direction from the facilitators when the task was not being performed properly:

Observation notes – School C

Day 2: Pressure Bottle (9.47am – 10.11am)

MF= male facilitator, FF= female facilitator

FF asks for volunteers and half the class put their hands up. A boy is chosen to sit in the middle and hold the water bottle.

I sense the children doing the persuading feel ridiculed when the child sat in the middle resolutely says 'no' to whatever the children say to try to pressurise him into giving them the water, and particularly when the child sitting in the middle starts to argue with them and expose flaws in their argument. In a few instances, the rest of the class laugh when the child holding the bottle argues with the persuader – often with comebacks such as 'no they don't hate me' or 'it's not a desert', in other words, not improvising in the way the persuaders are having to do.

I can see a few of the children getting frustrated that the child in the middle isn't playing along and a couple of time the class teacher asks the child in the middle to go along with the pretence. The game aims to show the children the tactics that abusive people use to control someone with less power than them, but here it's the child in the middle that holds the power, which isn't the message they are aiming for. I note that the children are interested in the competitive element between the boy holding the water and the persuader and it feels like the purpose of the game has been lost a little.

FF speaks privately to a boy who has volunteered to use flattery as a technique.

Boy: *What a kind person you are.*

Middle boy: *How old are you?*

Boy: *Ten.*

Middle boy: *I'm five.* (Class laugh)

It feels as if the boy holding the water bottle is undermining the task because the children are laughing at his comebacks. At the end, FF asks the boy to return to his seat and give her the water, which he does and FF uses this to illustrate that, because she has authority in the room, he gave her the water. She also refers to her age being a factor, i.e. you might be persuaded by someone because they're older than you.

This feeds into the earlier discussion about who should deliver these types of programmes, for example this outwardly assertive child might not have been chosen for the task if the teacher had delivered the material. As teachers are more familiar with their class, they may be better placed to select children for the activities. Similar comments are reported by Fox et al. (2014) who suggest that teachers may be best placed to select children to participate in activities, for example, facilitators may inadvertently upset children by selecting those who lack confidence to participate.

As a final point, it is notable that a significant proportion of children participating in the focus groups referred to the topics of sexual abuse and sexual pressure in relation to their learning. This suggests that children are interested in this subject-matter and that this is not generally addressed with children their age. For example, children were asked during the focus groups whether they had covered similar topics at school before the programme:

children from all schools mentioned previous learning on the subject of bullying; children in School A and C commented that the NSPCC had visited their school to talk about their ChildLine service - none of the children from School B mentioned this. One girl from the Catholic school, School B, remarked that as part of their religious teaching they had learnt they should '*respect others like God told us to*' and only children at School C stated that they had received sex and relationships education (SRE) in their previous school year (Year 5) in which they had been '*shown pictures of private parts*'. It is significant, although unsurprising, that none of the children mentioned previous learning around the topic of sexual abuse. The novelty of this material may have appealed to children who identified an increase in knowledge and awareness on this topic during the focus groups and a lack of familiarity with these topics may have been a factor for those children who were uneasy with these topics. However, these findings indicate that, despite their inexperience, this material can appeal to children and a lack of prior knowledge indicates the need for children to be learning about these topics in school.

d. Gender equality and equality within relationships

Raising children's awareness of positive and respectful relationships based on equal power is a goal tackled explicitly through a task which required children to discuss various job roles and relationship types as outlined in *Methods of delivery*, above. The opportunity to challenge gender stereotypes and promote positive beliefs arose during these discussions of gender differences within relationships. Only children in School B referred to this topic when reflecting on their overall learning, including 6 children; 3 boys and 3 girls all within single sex focus groups. Although it is unclear from these children's responses how their understanding of this issue had developed, this was a topic which interested them and one that they wanted to engage in further. The girls had strong views of the equal status of individuals within a partnership and this was framed within their understanding of an individual's economic status within the relationship:

Sarah: ... *when we got to the bit where it said the mother should be higher than the father or the father should be higher than the mother, I thought they should both be equal because they're both adults and they should both get, they should both get, I don't know how to say it...*

Aditi: *Like equal.*

Sarah: *Yeah they should both get equal parts because it would be fair, because if, the father shouldn't be higher than the mother because although the father works and sometimes can get the money, the mother can also do that.*

(Sarah and Aditi: Girls, School B, Group 1)

The boys also understood status in terms of individual roles within the relationship, however they presented more stereotypical views of the diversity of gender roles (Renold, 2005). The following extract illustrates the boys' more conventional understanding of male and female characteristics and how they defined power in relation to these qualities, particularly in terms of physical ability:

Samuel: *I thought that was wrong because people put like girlfriend all the way nearly at the top and the boyfriend all the way at the bottom. I got really angry with Jacob because the boyfriend has to actually protect the girlfriend from danger and he has to pay and everything for the girlfriend.*

Ethan: *I wasn't angry because I would put them in the same place because the boyfriend he has all the power and the muscle to protect the girlfriend (laugh)...*

Samuel: *Exactly!*

Ethan: *...to protect the girlfriend, and then the girlfriend has the power to tell the boyfriend 'don't go out late nights' and like they don't really have power as in physical power but they have power to tell the boyfriend what they think is right.*

Jacob: *I think the boyfriend has more power because the boyfriend has big arms and biceps so he can protect like if there's a killer clown, so*

anything can happen, but you never know the girlfriend can be stronger than the boy so I think that so they can be even, and the girlfriend can cook...

Samuel: *Yeah*

Jacob *...and make plans.*

Samuel: *Yeah, the girl organises the things for the boyfriend.*

Similar findings were reported in Lombard's (2015) study where boys (and girls) associated men/boys in relation to physical strength and, in opposition, women/girls as physically weaker but more verbal. In this dialogue, such gender stereotypes are challenged by Jacob, who states that 'the girlfriend can be stronger' and therefore 'they can be even'. However, this alternative construction is not sustained during the rest of the discussion and both Jacob and Samuel revert to socially produced and binary understandings of gender, describing girls' attributes in relation to being able to 'cook', 'make plans' and 'organise things'. As discussed above, this is a complex topic that children expressed strong views about during delivery of the programme. Engaging children in these discussions provided facilitators with the opportunity to challenge stereotypical attitudes towards gender norms and equality within relationships, and in doing so, encouraged children to reflect on their attitudes. The extract above suggests that although these boys continued to hold strong views of the distinct, socially constructed nature of gender roles, and the imbalance of power associated with these roles, through their conversations, children can continue to reflect on and challenge each other's attitudes.

e. Recognising and understanding healthy friendships

A key aim of this, and other such programmes is to increase children's understanding of healthy and unhealthy relationships and to promote affective change so that children have respectful relationships with their peers. This is a theme which four children referred to in terms of their learning, including one girl from School A, one boy from School B, and two girls from School C. One girl remarked that she had gained clarity around the definition of friendship, and another girl demonstrated her ability to identify disrespectful behaviour:

I think that Sam's friend, they didn't introduce. I think that he's just a rude person, a mean person, like doesn't think about his best friend instead of Sam, he thinks about Sam but not her. (Girl, School A, Group 1)

And it probably helps because like you understand now what friendships actually mean and what friends who actually bully you means as well. (Girl, School C, Group 2)

One boy, in School B, gave several examples of the effect of the programme on his own emotional awareness:

I also learnt that there's loads of words to understand people's feelings like through the games and the drama. (Boy, School B, Group 2)

Some of the tasks helped me by, they taught me the different emotions that you can get when you're around people like anger, sadness, happiness, funniness. (Boy, School B, Group 2)

These findings suggest that the programme helped these children to reflect on their own relationships and emotional awareness, increasing their knowledge and self-confidence to recognise healthy and unhealthy relationships. This awareness relates to affective changes with a few children from School B talking about improved relationships in the classroom, and this is discussed further below.

Improved skills, confidence and relationships

In addition to improved knowledge and awareness, some children reflected on the wider benefits of the programme.

a. Improved skills and feeling prepared

Five children, including four girls from Schools A and B, and one boy from School C talked explicitly in relation to their increased skills and perceived competencies to manage potentially harmful situations, developed (as outlined earlier) through practising hypothetical scenarios through role play. These children talked of knowing more about 'what to do' and 'how' to do it, so they felt better prepared, and more vigilant, by working through these situations in advance:

It helped us a bit with trying to solve an argument or like physical abuse, how to stop that. (Girl, School A, Group1)

...but the relationship workshop what we learn, we learnt a bit more about if we were in the scenario what would happen and what we should do by doing drama which I think was really good because we felt how we would be if we were to be in this situation. (Girl, School B, Group 1)

One boy, at School C, referred to feeling better prepared in relation to his feelings about his impending move to high school and his anxiety around the possibility of being bullied:

I think I might be able to use it with bullying, when I go to secondary school next year there's going to be a lot bigger kids than me and there's a chance of me getting bullied, so I could use these stuff. (Boy, School C, Group 1)

Children's expressed needs for material to be relevant, authentic and to connect with their own lived experiences relates to findings from a number of other evaluations (Fox et al., 2014; Reid Howie Associates, 2002; Stanley, Ellis and Bell, 2011; Stanley et al., 2015) where the importance for programme content to be relevant and meaningful for children so that messages are not disregarded is emphasised.

b. Increased confidence

Only boy mentioned feeling more confident in terms of participating in classroom activities and this was achieved through his experience of volunteering and being picked for an activity during the programme:

Before I'd always hesitate, just for everything I do, like when the teacher was speaking to a teacher and then they said to pick a teacher and then Daniel was a teacher, ...and then I put my hand up and then he picked me, like I was hesitating a little bit but then did do it because I got picked. (Boy, School C, Group 1)

c. Improved relationships in the classroom

In total, four children at School B, including two girls and two boys, recognised that relationships among their classroom peers had improved directly after the programme. Two boys identified changes in the behaviour of the whole peer group, as outlined in *Peer group setting* above, where they described improved conduct in the classroom, whereas the girls attributed this to an improvement in the boys' behaviour alone:

...on the Monday after the healthy relationships, I think over the weekend everyone changed, 'cause some people they tried to make commotion but no one listened, they just carried on with their work. (Boys, School B, Group2)

Since [male facilitator] and [female facilitator] have been, some boys have calmed down. (Girl, School B, Group 1)

Reid Howie Associates (2002) also reported that a number of primary school children in their evaluation believed that pupils' behaviour had improved after the programme. In the current study, improvements in children's behaviour were also identified by the class teacher at School B who indicated that class members were acting more respectfully both towards each other and towards her. As noted above, the teacher had described how children in this class lacked confidence in teachers in general and that this was a result of

having a succession of teachers in recent years. At the end of the programme, the teacher acknowledged an increase in mutual respect between herself and the children and that this had contributed to a more positive climate within the classroom.

Additionally, as mentioned above, two boys, one from School A and one from School B, described how they had become closer to their peers and had made more friends in class:

I think it's helped me 'cause I've made more friends. (Boy, School B, Group 2)

Children's Focus Group Findings Chapter Summary

- The majority of children found the programme topics to be enjoyable and stimulating and material appeared to be suitable for this age group. However, children expressed a need for discussions to be in-depth and to be given the opportunity to explore topics in full, rather than simply being 'told things'. Conceptualising children as active agents in the acquirement of knowledge by encouraging them to explore topics fully would enable their involvement to be participatory rather than passive.
- Drama and interactive methods were highly appealing to children, emphasising the value of this participative approach to learning. These methods appealed as they were uncharacteristic of normal methods of learning in school and enabled more authentic or embodied learning. Children value material that is relevant to their lived experience and which builds on, rather than simply repeating, former learning.
- Discussions within the peer group offer ways in which children can work through issues together and scaffold one another's learning, demonstrating the value of giving children space to enable them to do so. Group interaction can provide children with the opportunity to share ideas and form stronger attachments with their peers.
- The skills of the facilitators emerged as an important factor in children's engagement with the programme material, and children reported the value of facilitators who were both inclusive and treated them with respect. When adults take an active interest in children and are receptive to their questions, children can engage more fully.
- Children expressed a preference for learning in mixed-sex groups and for topics to be delivered by external facilitators, reasoning that they made learning more fun and attributing them with higher levels of expertise than their teacher.
- Most children who commented on the length of the programme would have preferred to spend more time learning about the topics covered and children were

critical of the lack of time available to them to prepare for the assembly presentation.

- Improved relationships, skills and confidence was a secondary outcome that children talked about in terms of programme impact. Some children recognised an improvement in relationships either within their own friendships or within whole class groups. A small number of children talked about their increased competency and preparedness to manage potentially harmful situations, and one child felt more confident in terms of participating in classroom activities.
- Gender differences were evident in relation to two topics including *Sexual abuse* and *Peer pressure and sexual bullying*. Learning around the topic of *Sexual Abuse* included themes of Safe Touch, Personal Space and the NSPCC underwear rule with over half of the girls discussing these themes in relation to their learning compared to a third of the boys. A larger number of girls discussed learning around *Peer pressure and sexual bullying* compared to boys and these were mostly the same girls who related their learning to the wider topic of sexual abuse. Girls were also more likely to relate their learning to an increase in skills and competence to manage potentially harmful situations.
- Overall, the topics of *Help seeking*, *Sexual abuse* and *Peer Pressure and sexual bullying* emerged as the areas that children most commonly reflected on in terms of their learning, with almost half the children taking part in the focus groups mentioning these topics. Although these are useful outcomes, these findings only pertain to those children participating in the focus groups at a particular point in time. As such, these findings reflect the views of those children who volunteered and/or were selected to participate in the focus group discussions and may perhaps represent the more confident and articulate children from each class.

CHAPTER SIX: ADULTS' VIEWS OF SCHOOL-BASED PROGRAMMES

Introduction

Adult responses to the programme were obtained through individual interviews with three Year 6 class teachers, six programme facilitators and four parents that explored individuals' views of the programme implementation and its impact. A similar approach to identifying key themes through inductive and deductive analysis, as described in the methodology chapter and in the previous chapter, was applied to the adult findings. The analysed findings presented below are organised under the headings: *Programme structure and process*, and *Programme outcomes and impact*. Themes drawn out from the adults' findings which are unique to this research and reflect those identified in the children's findings are described under key headings and include: readiness for programme implementation and sustainability; value of drama and interactive methods; locating content in children's experiences; value of learning within the peer group setting. Themes which build on those identified in the existing literature and which reflect themes described in other programme studies include: programme length and intensity; teacher roles; identifying disclosures; suitability of content; facilitator characteristics.

Programme structure and process

Process of programme implementation

All three of the class teachers, interviewed one week following the programme, thought that the programme was both beneficial and suitable for children aged 10 to 11 to whom it was delivered. The teacher from School A expressed explicit support for the delivery of the programme to this year group commenting that *'it's really important and I think it's brilliant at this age as well'*, whilst acknowledging that *'maybe they're not dealing with these sorts of topics at this age, but they're only a year away from secondary school...and they need to be aware of it from now'*. Following the programme, the teacher at the Catholic school, School B, was equally supportive after reflecting on some initial concerns during the programme delivery, *'at first I was, not cringing, but I was 'whoa' you know, this is really close to the mark, but it's what they need.'* As well as endorsing the programme for this age group of

children, the teacher at School C suggested that the programme would also be suitable for children in the year group below, and that *'bits of it would work for the younger years'*.

However, prior to programme delivery, senior staff in Schools A and B were not fully aware of the content of the programme and believed some of the topics to be *'unsuitable'* for the children. In the Catholic school (School B), the Deputy Head teacher (who was also deputy safeguarding lead) and the class teacher, expressed significant concern about sexual issues being talked about during the programme, as teaching 'sex education' was not perceived as in accordance with their faith. These staff were also sensitive to the views of some parents who they anticipated would express strong opinions about not teaching sex education to their children. However, although the programme tackles the issue of staying safe from sexual abuse, sex itself is not explicitly raised and, contrary to staff expectations, those parents did not contact the school to raise any concerns. A lack of parental anxiety regarding sexuality education for primary school children was reported by Robinson et al., (2017) who found that the majority of parents in their Australian study expressed positive attitudes towards the need for children's knowledge on this topic. In the current study, early anxieties were communicated by senior staff at both schools during a meeting with the researcher to discuss the evaluation process, which took place one week before the programme was due to be implemented. School staff had articulated their concerns at this point in time, despite having spoken directly with staff from Tender some weeks earlier when senior staff had agreed for their school to receive the programme and, according to Tender, had subsequently, received further written information outlining the aims and contents of the programme. These concerns were settled, for both schools, during discussions with Tender staff shortly before the programme was delivered.

A lack of preparedness to receive the programme was evident across all three of the participating schools: senior school staff had signed children up to the programme, after they were approached by Tender, without being fully aware of the programme content. Class teachers were similarly ill prepared for the delivery of the programme: all three teachers reported that they had not been consulted by senior staff about the decision to implement the programme in their class, and teachers had not received any detailed information about the programme beforehand. It should be noted that the programme was delivered in all three schools at a particularly busy time for schools, early in the academic year, and this may have impacted on schools' lack of readiness for programme implementation. However, a clear lack of communication between senior staff and the class teachers meant that some teachers were seemingly frustrated by this process.

Additionally, within the wider school context, business continued as normal within all schools during the two days the programme was delivered and these occurrences were recorded during observations of the programme. For example, in Schools B and C, children taking part in the programme were expected to attend morning assemblies, each lasting between 15 to 20 minutes. In School A, a girl was summoned to leave the classroom for a short period of time on the morning of Day 2, and in School C, the programme was briefly interrupted by a teaching assistant summoning children to leave the classroom to take part in extra support sessions during the afternoon of Day 1. In School C, a small number of children entered the room for a period of time after being sent out of their own classes for disruptive behaviour. Although primary schools typically operate in this way, these interruptions further reflect an apparent lack of schools' readiness for implementation of the programme.

When asked why they thought the school had decided to run the programme, teachers in Schools A and B talked about the anticipated benefits in relation to children who senior staff within their schools felt would benefit from a programme on healthy relationships, due to ongoing tensions and issues between children in class:

I think the deputy got the information in the summer term and it just looked like it would be something that would be really useful for our particular year group, because this year group has had a lot of issues with relationships between each other...their behaviour has been, the way they speak to each other, just their interactions, this particular cohort has had quite a lot of issues over the last few years and sometimes you just get a cohort like that. So I think initially that is what the deputy head thought 'Oh great! That would be brilliant for this year group'.
(Class teacher, School A)

It was [the deputy head], so it was done before I was here, and my concern especially with this class is they think they're older than what they are, and we've got some very well developed children in here that, although they look about fifteen, sixteen, aren't. And our concern is, last year there was a WhatsApp group and there was quite a lot of inappropriate behaviour going on that wasn't - I don't think they were maliciously doing it - I just think they were trying to be bigger than what they were,

and they got into a very sticky situation. So, as soon as it came up about Relationships, we just thought 'Bingo! That's what we need'. (Class teacher, School B)

Although the aim of the programme is to promote healthy relationships, raising children's awareness of healthy and unhealthy friendships is one area of learning among a wider range of themes and these teachers' responses imply a lack of clarity around the broader aims of the programme. For children in School A, this limited understanding directly affected the deputy head's and class teacher's decision, about which children they selected to participate in the programme, as the Year 6 group at this school (and at School C), comprised two classes¹⁸. The class teacher reflected on this lack of clarity and how it had influenced their decision making:

Some of the topics, it wouldn't have mattered whether those children were those children or not, because they're topics that all of the kids need to know...but the particular ones with the House of Friendship, I thought was brilliant because that particular group of children - and that's pretty much the way we chose them, because we thought it would be more about that. (Class teacher, School A)

This point was also made by one facilitator, who described how they '*do get called in to work specifically with classes and specifically with sorting issues that might be going on in the class...and so I'm not sure that we're the right people to be coming in and doing that*'. This suggests a common misperception amongst schools concerning the broader aims of the programme and subsequently their readiness to engage in it. As noted in the previous chapter, the use of the term 'healthy relationships' to describe programmes such as this, can lead to a lack clarity around the focus and content of the programme for both children and adults. Improving schools' readiness by ensuring that staff are clear about the purpose of the programme could help facilitate children's own engagement by discussing the aims of the programme with them beforehand. Such an approach would also provide opportunities for children to make a more informed decision about whether or not to participate in the programme beforehand and would therefore increase the extent to which programmes are child-centred.

¹⁸ Tender deliver the programme to a maximum of 30 children per primary school

The Year 6 cohort at School C, was also made up of two classes but, unlike School A, children were not selected from across the two classes. Rather, the teacher at School C reported that the decision to run the programme for the children in her class was ‘*probably*’ made by the school Business Manager, when they signed up for the programme, on the basis that the class teacher was the school PSHE coordinator, clarifying that ‘*I think she thought it was a good project for them to do and for me to observe*’. This was the only school, out of the three, where despite not having received any detailed information regarding the content of the programme from senior staff, as noted above, no particular concerns in relation to the programme topics were expressed beforehand. This may be because, as the school PSHE lead, the class teacher was already dedicated to children’s personal and social learning. Furthermore, this was the only school in which sex and relationships education (SRE) was specifically mentioned as an area of continual learning within the schools PSHE curriculum:

The last PSHE lesson of every term - so Autumn to Spring to Summer - is the SRE, sex and relationship education ...so the children begin by learning in Reception about their bodies, keeping hygienic, they know to name all of their body parts and each year it’s built up on so by the time they get to Year 5 and Year 6, they start to learn about puberty - they should be comfortable using the names for body parts. (Class teacher, School C)

Given this context, this school may have been better equipped to engage as concepts addressed by the programme are already recognised and valued within the school. As Swift et al. (2017) note, teachers’ enthusiasm and support for programmes has been identified as important for success and, children and staff may be more prepared to engage when similar topics are already endorsed or integrated into the curriculum in schools.

Informing parents

As described in Chapter Three, parents of the Year 6 children in the three participating schools were informed about the evaluation beforehand. Only parents of children from the Catholic school however, were given additional information from the school regarding the school’s decision to run the programme. This may have been due to concerns about how parents might respond and the expectation of a ‘*bad backlash*’. However, as noted above,

none of those parents contacted the school to express their concerns, contrary to the expectations of school staff:

They are a bunch of parents that will vocalise if they're not happy or they thought their children have been wrongly exposed. I have not had one complaint. I've not had any parents question me further what it was about...that's a good sign, because they do talk, they will question anything. (Class teacher, School B)

This teacher further described the constraints faced by the school in relation to teachings that were not in accordance with the Catholic faith, including relationships education. However, it was perceived that, as this work was delivered by an external agency, rather than by teachers at the school, the programme was more acceptable to parents than staff had anticipated:

I think it's a gap that needs to be filled and as a Catholic school, it's very hard for us because we do have restrictions with certain things - Relationships and Evolution - it's very hard to have a pre-planned thing there in front of us. It's much better for us to have someone from the outside, rather than parents who know us very well coming in and questioning everything we do. Because it was an outside agency, they seemed to be a lot more keen to the idea. (Class teacher, School B)

This suggests that whilst teachers within some schools may have concerns about these topics, with regards to both what they are permitted to teach and the responses of parents, the lack of criticism from parents at this school might indicate that teaching children about these topics was in fact welcomed, and perhaps that anxieties around these topics stem from the school's own discomfort around teaching these issues, particularly to children of primary school age. As Robinson et al. (2017) report, the majority of parents in their study believed that sexuality education was relevant and important to primary school children and recognised the importance of a collaborative approach between families and schools.

In addition to religious prohibitions, such concerns may relate to adult discourses around protecting children's innocence, as suggested by one of the facilitators:

...actually if we're going into faith schools and we're beginning to broach the subject of sex you know or intimate relationships, some faith schools don't want their children to be thinking about that or they're in denial and think their children don't think about that, you know it's like, come on people! (Facilitator 2)

Whilst none of the parents from the Catholic School were interviewed, all four of the parents interviewed from the other two schools, Schools A and C, viewed children's involvement in the programme positively, although these parents appeared to have only a limited understanding of the programme content. When asked how they found out about the programme, all three parents of the participating children (the child of one parent did not participate directly in the programme but had watched the assembly presentation) reported that they had seen 'a letter' sent home from school, although the letter related to consent for their child's involvement in the evaluation rather than information about the programme itself. Two of the parents reported that their children had also mentioned the programme to them before it was implemented but, as children were similarly ill informed, they were not equipped to give any further detail:

She told me her teacher had told her about the healthy relationships workshop and she said she was interested in the programme and she wants to know more about that. (School C, Parent 1)

As none of these parents expressed concern regarding their lack of knowledge about the programme content beforehand, this may suggest that parents trust schools' decisions to run external programmes and are not required to give their consent. Perhaps as a result of this lack of information however, the four parents interviewed reported having limited dialogue with their children about the programme content afterwards:

Well she came out and said that they'd talked about things and done things in groups and they'd discussed things, but she didn't go into much detail. (Parent, School A)

Although children are typically constrained when they talk about what they learn in school, parents could be more prepared to engage in conversations with their children if they were better informed about the programme topics, as one parent suggested:

I think it would have been nice afterwards for the parents to have some sort of a letter just to say that what they'd actually done. (Parent, School A)

It is acknowledged that some children do not want to talk about these topics with their parents while some parents lack the proficiency to address such issues directly with their children and those parents may benefit from additional information about ways they can support the programme's core concepts indirectly. As Tutty (1997) cautioned, the gains made by children's learning in school can be negligible if messages are not reinforced by family members. Indeed, one child remarked that she felt her mother would have a negative view of the programme if she was more aware of the contents, therefore restricting this child's opportunities to talk further about concepts addressed by the programme at home. This point was also made by one facilitator who understood that parents' lack of experience in engaging with these topics might be a potential barrier to them fully supporting the work:

Parents, I imagine for the same reason, probably a lack of experience with this is probably a barrier too, how do you educate them in this... 'cause I'd be nervous...
(Facilitator 4)

Although none of the parents interviewed expressed these concerns, involving parents in the programme, so that the aims of the programme become transparent, might help to reassure some of the more anxious parents (see Chapter Seven for further discussion on engaging parents).

Despite their lack of programme knowledge, all four of these parents thought that school was a suitable place for children to learn these topics, reasoning that learning collectively means that children can help and support each other, and that school may be the only place that some children hear these messages:

Yes, yes, it's a good thing children can learn about these things, and when their friends should do anything like this, they will know what to do. (Parent 1, School C)

I think it's very good for them 'cause they might not necessarily hear that otherwise. I mean they do from staff at school, but generally, from outside and that, they might not hear that. (Parent, School A)

Peer group setting

As noted in Chapter Five, like other similar school-based programmes (CRG Research, 2009; Fox et al., 2014; Reid Howie Associates, 2002; Stanley, Ellis and Bell, 2011), the programme evaluated for this study is delivered to classes of up to 30 children in mixed sex groups, thereby reflecting how children normally learn in school. Delivering messages to children in peer groups meant that facilitators were at times able to skilfully utilise the group dynamic to demonstrate programme messages and make the material relevant to children's lives:

...the presentation sessions, when they were all deciding what they were doing, one of the groups they were treating each other in an inappropriate way, and because we'd already covered how to resolve conflict with that sentence on the board - I reminded them of that and shared that sentence with each other, you know adding in their own words; 'You make me unhappy when you (dah, dah, dah)'. Once I'd mentioned it, they did remember it and engage with that... (Facilitator 3)

However, learning within the peer group setting could also present challenges which needed to be handled sensitively by facilitators:

I've had projects, for example, where children have said 'No, you do not tell your friends secrets, because you break families up if you do it', and then you're in a moment in the room where you're saying, 'Ok, so services have quite clearly seen there's a danger there and that person...' and this child is going 'No, you break families up - like my family - we all ended up in care because somebody told a

secret'. Then you've got a really difficult moment in the room because you know that whatever the secret was, that child had obviously been deemed at quite some serious risk from the family for them all to have been put into care. So that's a really hard moment. So we didn't have a moment like that, and of course a voice like that can very clearly put the message across to everybody else - it doesn't matter what the adult says! (laughing). (Facilitator 5)

Understanding what can happen if they choose to speak out against an adult is important to children (see Chapter Five) and the extract above provides an example of how children may not accept that they can seek support without adverse consequences. Peer group discussions can enable complex topics which are relevant to children's lives, such as telling secrets, to be raised and explored in full. By working through these issues together, children can begin to feel better equipped with relevant knowledge about which secrets must be told rather than constructing their own interpretations alone. By providing concrete examples, such as that described in the extract above, children may be able to grasp these complex concepts more easily (Briggs and Hawkins, 1994) and be reassured about the consequences of seeking help. Yet, as this extract highlights, in order to be effective, group discussions need to be managed skilfully. Previous research by Fox et al. (2014) reports that if problematic misconceptions are insufficiently discussed, they are more likely to endure and therefore need to be constructively challenged without individuals feeling as though they are being chastised.

One facilitator reported how tensions can occur within the group dynamic and this highlights the importance of ensuring that bullying behaviours are not reinforced during the process of programme delivery:

You're aware there's a little tension in the group or a latent sort of instigating fears. Some kids can't speak 'cause the group dynamic is so aggressive... (Facilitator 4)

Differences in children's readiness to explore topics concerning intimate relationships were also identified as a potential barrier to children's learning:

It's a difficult one, because in primary schools what you're dealing with is a difference in age - in their mentality. So in that group, there'll be girls who are thinking about relationships, who may even be in relationships ...and for other people it's like, can't even fathom the idea, let alone, it's so beyond their consciousness. So it's quite a broad age range to be dealing with and you're trying to deliver messages that are quite sort of on a different level basically (laughs).
(Facilitator 5)

However, as discussed in Chapter Five, through their collective learning, children who are less receptive can potentially benefit from group discussion with children who are ready to tackle difficult topics. By providing opportunities to talk in groups, children can begin to work through potential concerns together.

Length of the programme

Teachers from Schools A and C were critical of the duration of the programme, reporting that the two-day format was too intensive for the children and that children were unable to focus for this amount of time. Similar comments were made by children participating in the focus groups (see Chapter Five) who suggested that cramming the programme into two days meant '*it was hard to memorise everything*' (Boy, School B). Instead, both teachers suggested delivering the programme over a series of afternoon sessions; the teacher at School A considered that this would allow the children and teachers time to reflect on the material in between sessions (a position that was also shared by one of the facilitators), whilst the teacher at School C thought this alternative format would be easier to build into the timetable:

I don't know if maybe having two days they felt it might have a bigger impact, but I think with those children their concentration span is still quite, it's not as great as if maybe they were two years ahead. So maybe four afternoon sessions within a week may have been more, probably more effective. And maybe having that dialogue with the teacher to have, maybe follow up things to do with the children in-between them coming in, would probably be quite effective. (Class teacher, School A)

Yeah, that was difficult especially in Year 6. It would be better as in over a series of afternoons. I think that would work better because we stream for Maths - that meant three classes were off timetable for two days, which had quite a big impact on Year 6. So I think afternoons would always be better. (Class teacher, School C)

In contrast, the teacher from School B, and one child participating in the focus group believed that the two-day format was essential in order to maintain the children's engagement and momentum:

I think you can't start that and expect to follow it through, because there was a real pattern and trail of events... 'cause some of the things, I thought, 'where are they going with this?' you know, when they were doing the careers and then it went into doctors and nurses and I thought 'Right, that's going to go into, you know, looking at stereotypical images of a man and woman.' If you stop that mid-way and came back, you're going to lose the momentum, it'll lose the engagement. I think it's the only way to do it. And they loved having them here and it was you know off timetable and fun. I think if that became a once a week kind of lesson it would in an hour, number one, you're not going to get that relaxed, and number two, I think we'd lose them every time you're doing it, if you keep going back to where you started. (Class teacher, School B)

The benefits of the two-day format were echoed by two of the facilitators, who identified that children were less likely to drop out and that messages would not need to be repeated when summarising previous sessions, whilst it was also perceived that the intensity of two days allowed for messages to be retained:

I think they might even enjoy it, and there's benefits to the fact they're there for two days and there's no getting out of this. They're on that ride the entire way through, which is opposed to having someone coming in for - I've done ones where there's an hour or two hours a week and by the time you've come back they've forgotten some

things and need to remind them, and then for them it feels like you're talking about the same thing each week because you're having them to remind them - 'Oh we're always talking about healthy relationships'. So there's benefits to the two days.
(Facilitator 4)

I certainly think an intense focus for two days makes it stick relatively well because it's so comprehensively done, just in that time. (Facilitator 3)

In addition, the teacher at School A, and four of the six facilitators reported that the volume of topics covered over a two-day period meant that the programme often felt '*rushed*' and this created a tension for facilitators who often had to make quick decisions about how to rearrange topics to fit into the time available.

...there was so much that they had to put into those two afternoons that it became quite rushed, I think, towards the end and I thought 'Oh that's a shame!' 'cause, you know, there's so much that's gone in - it needed to be really tied up properly...
(Class teacher, School A)

It did feel we were squashing in a ten week project into a day. So you get all of those concepts - what's healthy, what's unhealthy, where do you go for support - all those things, 'So now, [deep breath] we're going to talk about FGM, and then we can do a presentation' [soft mock voice]. (Facilitator 4)

Facilitators were conscious of the conflict between ensuring that all the topics prescribed by the funder were covered over the two days, but also that children were given space within the programme to explore those topics. Time restrictions often meant that facilitators had to make a compromise between these two demands and it appeared that this decision was dependent on the position of the individual facilitator:

...I had to make choices about what we were going to drop because the timings in the booklet are - that exercise will take 15 minutes; that one will take 10 minutes - no it won't! No it won't. Because in the room the children are talking. It happened with us...on the first day they went down a particular road where specific children had specific questions that they want to answer, so we have to honour that and we have to investigate that. (Facilitator 2)

These conflicts meant that facilitators were repeatedly frustrated that children's opportunities to learn through questions and discussion were often compromised:

...on the first day it feels like you have so much to get through in terms of the plan...and the difficult thing about that is that so much of the work that's key to the Tender work is in the discussion. You do an exercise and that's meant to generate a discussion from the class, and as a facilitator you're conscious to challenge...and keep guiding it, keep it going and it does feel on the first day you are really trying to steam ahead. (Facilitator 1)

It's a lot to get in in those couple of days..., once those discussions open up, you could of course spend more time on those discussions, and the issues brought up in them. But because there's so much in there, you have to kind of push on getting through as much as you can. (Facilitator 3)

These comments are relatively consistent in the recognition that there is too much to cover in the time available and this sentiment is echoed in the findings from the children's focus group discussions reported in Chapter 5, where most children reported a preference for more time to be spent learning about the issues covered. Reflection through discussion is a key feature of educational drama (McNaughton, 2014) and if the time required for learning through discussion and reflection is not provided, then important opportunities for children to develop their understanding may be lost. Recognising children as active learners would enable them to explore topics in full and, it is perhaps therefore down to the schools to return to the topics for further discussion once the programme ends. There is very little evidence in the literature concerning the question of programme length and intensity, however Stanley et al. (2015) report that where length and/or intensity were formally tested

shorter/less intensive programmes were overall equally or more likely to show benefits, although those with greater exposure to learning did better, suggesting that the important issue may be to tailor programmes to overall need rather than simply prescribe length/intensity overall. The rationale provided for the length of the programme studied here was primarily linked to an understanding that a two-day intensive structure enables children time to explore, play and discuss more freely than otherwise might be possible over disparate sessions. This decision, was also linked to funding and programme developers' assumptions around the time frames schools would be prepared to take up. However, as noted above, if programme length is determined by children's own learning preferences, additional time would be made available for children to explore issues more fully and similar findings were reported by Ellis (2006) where children stated a preference for more time to enable them to learn more.

Teachers' roles

As noted in Chapter Five, there are ongoing debates raising questions around who is best placed to deliver programmes in schools. The children participating in this study showed a preference for external staff to deliver this work, recognising specialist facilitators as having greater knowledge and expertise, whilst at the same time acknowledging the closer nature of the relationship with their teachers. Similar observations were made by Fox et al. (2014) who identified the advantages of delivery by external agencies with experience of discussing topics and managing a range of attitudes whilst recognising the value of teachers' knowledge of children's personal circumstances. Although this question wasn't explicitly addressed in the adult interviews, one of the facilitators perceived that '*most [teachers] are generally quite appreciative of it being talked about*' by external staff, and this appeared to be consistent with the views of both the teacher from School A, who implied that she lacked the capacity to teach this work, and the teacher from the Catholic school who appeared to resist involvement because she lacked the necessary confidence and expertise:

I think we're just grateful that there is a project out there that will do things like this, because it's quite a lot to run and there's a lot of information, a lot of activities...
(Class teacher, School A)

I'm not professional in delivering about internet safety...obviously [the female facilitator] and [male facilitator] have had a lot of training on that and I would, I would feel slightly uncomfortable going into the depths that they went into 'cause I'm not social worker trained. So for us, I think it's a bit of a relief, and for the parents, I don't know why, but the minute you get an outside agency in they seem to sort of really you know, trust them and I just think, you know you saw some of the reactions of the children, laughing and giggling, if I was in here, it would make them uncomfortable. (Class teacher, School B)

Whilst the teacher at the Catholic school believed that teaching the material herself would *'make them uncomfortable'*, it is notable that only children from this school specified a preference for their teacher to deliver this material over the facilitators, based on the close relationship they considered they enjoyed with her, although other children at this school favoured a joint approach between both the facilitators and their teacher. As such, it may be the case that this teacher's own discomfort and insecurity stemmed from her perception that teaching on these topics was not consistent with Catholic schools' principles and that *'relief'* from managing this conflict was offered by the involvement of external providers. Nonetheless, as noted above, this teacher fully endorsed the programme stating that it is *'what they need'*, whilst also recognising that, although PSHE is part of the school curriculum, *'it doesn't always get taught and...unfortunately the R.E. [Religious Education] does take precedence over it...'*. Therefore, it appears that whilst some teachers may support the work, they may lack the skills and confidence to teach the material and may struggle both personally and professionally with content, understandings and approaches to relationships education (Ollis et al., 2013). In order to be implemented successfully in the long term, teachers may need the support and additional training from specialist domestic abuse services to help prepare them and to overcome the challenges of delivering this type of work, particularly in schools where this material is not already covered. At a broader level, the system's readiness to incorporate this material into the primary school curriculum through the introduction of the new Relationships Education curriculum (DfE, 2018) is likely to facilitate this process.

All three class teachers, and/or teaching assistants were present during the delivery of the programme and although there appeared to be some uncertainty among teachers regarding their own purpose in the classroom at the start of the programme, all the teachers seemed

to adopt an observer/support role. A lack of clarity around the role of the teacher during programme delivery was also reported by Ellis (2004) who found that when this was left to the discretion of the teacher this led to some confused situations in the classroom and anxiety for some teachers. Whilst teachers in Schools A and C sat among the children and occasionally joined in the activities, the teacher in School B sat and worked at a distance from the children, intervening occasionally to help manage children's behaviour and to support children on one or two occasions, if they needed to leave the room.

I didn't know what I'm supposed to do really at the beginning, I thought 'Shall I just leave them? Do I get involved? How much involvement?' and I think I felt because it was a quite sensitive topic that they needed to, and I wanted them, to have authority in the class. I thought I'll step back and let them kind of take over, so the kids are directing everything towards them. (Class teacher, School A)

They sent in the original correspondence - I think it said I was really there to manage behaviour, so I think that's what my role was. They said that I could interject at the beginning, if I wanted to, and there were few points where I did interject. I felt quite comfortable to sit out of some things and sit with other things. I felt I was there more to manage behaviour. (Class teacher, School C)

In comparison to teachers at Schools A and C, the teacher at the Catholic school appeared more reticent at the start of the programme, possibly owing to her initial discomfort as described above, although she described being reassured early on due to the skills and competence of the facilitators:

I thought I'd be a lot more involved than what I was, but [the female facilitator] and [the male facilitator] they know what they're doing. But I sensed very early on actually, I need to back off a little bit. I kept ears open, because it's fascinating hearing that side of it, but I didn't want them to feel that they couldn't speak freely. I still wanted to listen...but I knew I had to step back a little bit to make them feel comfortable. (Teacher, School B)

This level of teacher engagement appeared to be that favoured by the facilitators delivering the programme, amongst whom the consensus was that ideally teachers would observe the programme, and occasionally get involved. Through their observations, teachers can learn alongside the children (CRG Research, 2009) and potentially incorporate programme messages and techniques into their own lessons thereby ensuring the long-term sustainability of the programme (Stanley, Ellis and Bell, 2011). Through an appropriate level of participation teachers can also help to galvanise the class during delivery:

If they're involved all the time, I think the children would be inhibited by it. I think for the teachers to have the freedom from marking - to be able to watch - would be awesome and pick up those little things ...then there's extra questions that they can ask because they have a much bigger history with them, so...if a teacher exposes themselves a little bit in the occasional exercise, it'll help the entire class to do that.
(Facilitator 4)

Although facilitators considered that teachers could help to encourage children's participation and stimulate discussion, this did not appear to have been made explicit to them, as indicated in the quotes above where teachers seemed to work out a comfortable level of involvement for themselves. However, the following observations support the suggestion that teachers can help to target discussions so that topics become relevant and connected to children's prior learning in school. During a whole group discussion, a teacher at School A asked '*In an intimate relationship, is it ok for a girl to hit a guy?*' This was a teaching assistant, or possibly a teacher from another year group, who was sitting in the classroom while the class teacher had briefly left the room. Prior to this, the children were keenly engaged in a discussion with the facilitators around hitting and punishment:

Observation notes - School A

Day 1 - Task 4: Conflict Countdown (10.50am – 11.30am)

T= teacher, MF= male facilitator, FC= female child, MC= male child

T then raised her hand and asked: '*In an intimate relationship, is it ok for a girl to hit a guy?*'

MF put the question to the children:

FC: *'It's still physical abuse.'*

MC: *'It's usually boys who hit people, girls just think nice and pretty stuff.'*

MF: *'If I hit her, could I hurt her in terms of the law?'*

MF explained that the law is exactly the same for males and females, but asked *'Why do we concentrate on females rather than males?'* and then referred to some DV statistics to explain that women are more likely to suffer domestic violence than men. MF asked the children *'What is domestic violence?'* Children shouted out a few answers including: *'Physical abuse'* and *'Sexual abuse'*...

MC: *'In the playground if a girl hits you, your friends will laugh but in home if a girl hits me would be same but men are normally abusive ones'*

MF picked this up to talk about power in relationships and asked for hands up who thinks men or women have more power. The majority think men have more power.

FC: *'Men would normally have a job and women would stay at home'.*

MF referred back to the power game to get children to think about what power is. MF said *'If an alien came to Earth who would they say has more power?'*

The children are all listening to these explanations and to each other's questions and explanations.

MF: *'There is inequality in our society, but there is no reason for it, but it's the way men want it.'*

At this point the children are quietly taking this in but aren't asked if they have any more questions. MF and FF then move on to the next task.

The children have been more engaged and stimulated by this discussion than any other so far, and it feels as though this conversation could have gone on much further.

At the end of the session, this teacher approached the facilitators to apologise for asking the question and explained that she felt that it was useful for the children to have that conversation with the facilitators, based on an issue that had arisen previously for the children. However, this question was well received by both facilitators who considered it useful because it offered another perspective and because *'it's good for the students to also see that their teachers are interested.'* (Facilitator 1). As noted in other programme evaluations (Swift, 2017), teachers' enthusiasm and support for programmes has been identified as important for success, yet it is also recognised that teachers who become too actively involved in programmes can inadvertently discourage children's participation (Fox et al, 2014).

Although the conversation leading up to this question was not gender based, and the topic

of domestic violence is not explicitly addressed in the primary school programme, the male facilitator was able to incorporate the subject of the gendered nature of domestic violence into the discussion in a way that appeared to be acceptable to the children. It is interesting to note how the children positioned themselves when the question of whether it is 'ok for a girl to hit a guy' was put to them; a girl was first to reply that she did not endorse women hitting men, followed by a boy who made the point that *'it's usually boys who hit'*. As this was not challenged by other members of the class, it appeared that the children were able to accept these statements. It is also notable that none of the children, and particularly none of the boys, outwardly resisted the specific message that women are more likely to suffer domestic violence than men, as has been reported in other evaluations of school based programmes for older children where some boys criticised programmes they saw as 'sexist' or as neglecting male victims of abuse (Stanley et al., 2015; Fox et al., 2014). The apparent acceptability of this message may be a consequence, first, of its delivery by a male facilitator, as opposed to a female facilitator, and second, that it was a discussion volunteered by a teacher, rather than being a discussion imposed on the children by the facilitator. This supports the earlier point that, through their occasional input, teachers can assist in guiding discussions and such input can be helpful as *'it shows their involvement in what's going on which is good for the children to see'* (Facilitator 2). This may also give teachers the confidence to return to the topic once the facilitators leave.

One facilitator did remark that input from teachers should be limited so that ownership is retained by the children:

...if the teacher is sort of speaking in place where the children could or should be speaking, then you know, we would probably say something... the space is there for the children to explore and to be free to explore, so don't impose... (Facilitator 2)

Another facilitator commented on an incident at a different primary school, where a female teacher who was standing in for the class teacher had undermined a girl in the class, as well as the facilitator, through inappropriate classroom behaviour management. This facilitator reported that:

...there was an incident...basically the boy had been taunting the girl and the girl

shouted 'Stop it!' really loud. The teacher screamed across the hall at the girl, mid us facilitating. I was completely taken aback...she shouted at the girl in front of everyone, in front of the whole class. Didn't take her to one side and find out what was happening, shouted at the girl, completely embarrassed her...and the girl started crying in the middle of the session... (Facilitator 1– referring to an incident at another primary school)

This episode is counter to key programme messages around respectful behaviour as well as children being permitted to speak out against undesirable conduct programme. As noted above, a lack of clarity around the role of the teacher during programme delivery can lead to confusion around the nature and extent of children's involvement (Ellis, 2004) and problematic incidents such as the one described in the extract above might be avoidable if staff within schools were better prepared before programme implementation. This might include a direct conversation between school staff and external facilitators beforehand around what teachers can do to support both the facilitators in the classroom and children in their learning, as well as ensuring that all relevant staff, including those who will be present during delivery, have a comprehensive understanding of the content of the programme and what it aims to achieve.

Programme outcomes and impact

Disclosures

A key aim of the programme is that children are able to identify where to seek support, as well as how to disclose, and throughout the programme children were encouraged to seek help, largely from a teacher if needed. As such, an increase in children's help-seeking could be a measure of successful implementation of programme messages. However, school staff are often described as voicing concern over dealing with subsequent disclosures and this is identified as a disincentive for some schools to deliver prevention programmes (Stanley et al., 2015). Consideration as to whether schools have the skills and resources to respond appropriately to disclosures is also brought into question (Ellis et al., 2015).

Teachers reported disclosures by three children between the time the programme was delivered and one week following the programme, when the interviews took place; one in

school A and two in School B, while the teacher at School C reported that no disclosures had been made as a result of the programme. The way in which these disclosures occurred varied; two of these disclosures were made by children directly to teachers at school, outside their lessons. The one disclosure made by a child from School A, was reported to the deputy head during the two days when the programme was delivered, as described by the class teacher:

No, I think we had one, but it wasn't...yeah, one about sort of cyberbullying...So obviously that made them feel maybe more confident on the day to talk about...somebody sending the messages to them they didn't like...But that's something that we've had ongoing within this particular cohort as well since Year 5.
(Class teacher, School A)

In School B, one disclosure was made directly to the class teacher shortly after the programme had ended. This was also a disclosure of cyber bullying (or cyber harassment), where a girl reported to her teacher that she had felt 'pressure' from a boy in her class to communicate with him by text. In both these cases, it is unclear whether children had sought support from a friend beforehand, or whether they had disclosed directly to their teacher unaided.

The other disclosure occurred during a whole class discussion while the programme was being delivered, whereby a statement made by a child was interpreted by the class teacher as a disclosure, or at least raised her concerns about a child protection issue:

Teacher: *There was one child that slightly concerned me when we were talking about alcohol...*

Nicola: *And do you think you're going to do anything with that?*

Teacher: *We've got CAMHS involved anyway so since last week there's more come out...so whether Tender brought out some feelings in her she feels now, you know, wants to express, you don't know, but we're keeping a watchful eye on her. I'm glad they came in. It was great because obviously I'm glad they*

came in, and I felt I'd proper listened, really kind of addressed that there may be mental health issues here and how can we support, so yeah.

(Class teacher, School B)

These more subtle disclosures are made in ways that can easily be overlooked by external facilitators who are less familiar with the children. In this instance, the teacher was aware of the child's circumstances and was perhaps, therefore, more sensitive to this child's comments. This links in with the discussion around how teachers can usefully lend support to facilitators delivering this work, so that these types of indirect disclosures can be picked up and acted upon as described by one of the facilitators:

We need that, we need that because, one, they know the children better than we do, much better than we do, they know more about the dynamics within the group...but they also know what's going on for the students and we're doing particularly sensitive sort of work really, and it might trigger...so you need the teacher in there to be able to catch that. She may have knowledge of the stuff that's going on that we have no idea about. (Facilitator 2)

It is worth noting that all three disclosures were made by girls, which could suggest that boys may have been more resistant to programme messages around help seeking or perhaps that boys are more likely to disclose in different, or more discreet ways. It is possible, therefore, that other disclosures were made but not picked up by either the facilitators or school staff. Children's vulnerability to unequal power relations with adults, and their understanding that speaking out may have negative consequences suggests that adults working with young children need to be alert to the variety of ways they might communicate their experiences and that children should not carry the burden of speaking out to seek help by themselves. It may also be the case that other disclosures were made subsequently to the interviews with teachers which took place one week following the programme. However, all the teachers and facilitators interviewed reported that they were familiar and confident with the structures and procedures in place in each of their organisations, and that training was regularly attended and updated so that staff remained alert should a child protection issue arise.

Teachers in Schools A and B considered that the disclosures made directly by the two girls were a result of the messages they were receiving during the programme about speaking out and asking for help. Although the teacher at School A acknowledged that cyberbullying was an ongoing issue for the class, she credited the programme for making the girl *'feel maybe more confident on the day to talk about [it]'*. The teacher at School B was confident that as a result of the programme the girl in her class had been empowered to talk about a situation that was making her uncomfortable:

...the words (laughs) she was using was coming from the course. But what a good way to vocalise what was going on in her head, she said 'I feel he was putting pressure on me to speak to him and I don't want, I felt uncomfortable'. Job done really isn't it? (Class teacher, School B)

Contrary to findings from other evaluations noted previously (Ellis et al., 2015; Stanley et al., 2015), teachers at these schools did not raise concerns about dealing with subsequent disclosures as a result of the programme. This may be partly due to the small number of disclosures that had occurred at the time of the interviews (a total of 3 among 82 children) but perhaps also that teachers were, for the most part, already familiar with the issues faced by the children in their class. This may be easier to achieve in primary schools, where class sizes are relatively small, allowing teachers to build and maintain close relationships with children as they progress through the school years.

Programme content

All three of the class teachers spoke positively about the topics covered in the programme, despite some initial concerns prior to delivery about the appropriateness of the material for children this age, as outlined above. Teachers perceived that the programme had helped children to identify, and to feel empowered to manage potentially abusive situations, as well as learning where they can go to for help. Whilst it was acknowledged that young children may not be thinking about some of the issues raised in the programme at this stage, the teacher from School C recognised that some children would be familiar with issues around cyber bullying and harassment:

... I think it's really good. The more information you can give the children about the whole thing of empowering them to feel comfortable about saying 'No', just knowing there are people that are there to help them, and having those sort of discussions out in the open so they're less likely to keep these negative things or things that are happening to them secret, you know - I'm 100% for it. (Class teacher, School A)

I did think the scenario with Charlie was quite useful actually, because it is quite similar to lots of situations that they do actually have and hearing the advice that they came to at the end of the project, I thought that was particularly useful... We had a lot of issues in Year 5 to do with WhatsApp and messaging, so I actually think that Charlie scenario would have been quite useful for some of the younger children as well because they've all got iPhones, they've all got these devices...(Class teacher, School C)

However, as noted in the previous chapter, although children may be familiar with issues around cyber bullying, the examples used within programmes to aid children's learning need to be applicable to children and during the focus group discussions, some children dismissed the scenario referred to in the extract above as lacking relevance to their current lives.

One parent described how the programme had helped her child to be aware of some of the issues they might face in the near future reporting that: *'from my point of view, I'm really worried about secondary school, how is he going to adjust?'* (Parent 3, School C). Children expressed similar concerns around their impending move to high school and this emphasises the need for programmes to give children the space to explore current issues. One facilitator considered that programme messages around gender inequality were often ambiguous and dependent on the discussions instigated amongst the group:

...the reason I think I don't know whether we're tackling gender successfully is because I feel sometimes like we're kind of, it becomes quite class led, it becomes quite student led and...I find that exercise where we lay out boyfriend and girlfriend or husband and wife etc. etc. ... it depends on the knowledge in the group rather than

it being - it's one of those ones where I'm left with the sense of slight dissatisfaction with it. (Facilitator 5)

These topics may be novel to some children and group interaction can provide children with opportunities to explore unfamiliar topics together whilst enabling their learning to be participatory. The role of the adult facilitator is to skilfully facilitate learning by managing a whole range of children's experiences and opinions (Fox et al., 2014) and to capture children's interest (CRG Research, 2009). As noted in the previous chapter, children value being treated as active learners and limiting adult input may help to ensure that children retain ownership of discussions so that learning can continue once a programme ends.

One facilitator identified that children would benefit from more information and clarity around the consequences of help seeking, and this was an area where children themselves were critical of the lack of opportunity within the programme to explore this topic more widely:

I just wonder if there's room for a bit more work around what happens if you do tell ... so I just wonder if we could do something with a role play around that confidentiality and what might happen so that children are a little bit more informed about what happens if they do tell...(Facilitator 1)

Methods of delivery

a. Drama and role play

As outlined in Chapter Five, the interactive approaches adopted in the programme emerged as a popular method of learning amongst the children and teachers were also positive about the use of role play and activities as a means of exploring the issues safely, as well as being an effective means of engaging the children in issues that are relevant to them:

I also liked the role play when the adult was pretending to be the child. They loved that, I don't know there was just something about...just making the adult seem one of them, and they really opened up a lot more when they were pretending to be

Charlie and pretending to be a child and they kind of really enjoyed that advisory role in what they should do. (Class teacher, School B)

The popularity of drama as a method of engaging children and as a means of exploring difficult issues was reiterated by one of the facilitators:

... they do enjoy the drama...the good thing about using drama is that rather than just reading something, it actually goes into the body a little bit...it's such a brilliant way of tackling tricky subjects, you know, rather than standing in front of the classroom just talking at the children - get them involved, get them thinking, watching their peers. (Facilitator 2)

Although drama and role play emerge as a popular method for engaging children, as McNaughton (2014) points out, a key feature of this method is reflection on the situations presented and allowing children the space to reflect within programmes is critical.

b. Whole group discussions

Discussing the issues raised in the programme within the whole class provided children with the opportunity to share their ideas and learn from each other and this was advocated by facilitators who acknowledged that *'so much of the work that's key to the Tender work is in the discussion'*. Through their discussions, children were afforded opportunities to become familiar with the topics allowing them to continue these conversations once the programme ended:

...they clearly have learnt a good way to talk to each other and a way of positively disagreeing so that they can say 'I disagree with this person because' and then give their reasoning which is really nice, but actually to be able to slightly leave them to it...they were just talking to each other and you go, 'this is really nice' because it means when we're not here, the conversation can carry on and so we don't have total ownership of it which is really important otherwise its 'those two days that those two people came in and we talked about that thing', rather than 'that subject that we now can talk about'. (Facilitator 6)

Teachers in Schools B and C were critical of the programme however, for being too reliant on group discussion, suggesting that there was not enough variation between class discussions and other methods of teaching. The teacher in School B added that children who are more reticent, or those with less developed language skills, found these methods challenging and those children would have benefited from more visual methods:

The only thing I'd change would be to add videos or music or something multimedia, because we're basically talking so much about multimedia, I think it would be good to have more hands on and let them see it first hand, see someone get a text. Especially with my speech and language children, they struggled with the role play but to see something visual, it would be even better...[One girl] in particular, the language skills, she's normally kind of disadvantaged and I think she would have benefited from seeing something visual, or clips with children their age. (Class teacher, School B)

I feel it was too much circle time and I don't feel that all the children in my class coped well with two days of circle time. They're not used to having it that much. When they did the Friendship House that was good, because they did the circle time and then they did an activity with the sugar paper and that was...a bit less intense when they do that...I think it's quite a lot for them to do, two whole days of circle time...I could see there were points where it seems that their attention was going and they were trying to impress the people that were all looking at them. (Class teacher, School C)

Yet findings from the children's focus groups suggest that children valued this participatory approach and were keen to engage in deeper discussion appealing for 'more details, more stuff and explain more about it', particularly around the consequences of seeking help. The tension here may be that although children value being treated as active learners, the more traditional and passive methods of learning adopted in schools means that they may 'not be used to it' as identified by the teacher in the extract above. Children's limited experience of learning through group discussion, was also acknowledged by some facilitators. However, group discussion and reflection were considered valuable when implemented appropriately:

I think the conversations, sitting anywhere for a long time with primary school kids, despite the fact they spend their entire day normally sat behind desks, in this circle format is different for them...having conversations, I think that's a little hard for them. Although I understand, I think that it is really important. Listening to other people talk and not getting your turn straight away...not getting to speak when you want to, that's really hard for them, and that can be draining as you've seen by the second day ...the facilitators I think need to work really well at breaking that up as much as possible - doing different things, different games, stand up, move around, back to the conversation or establishing those rules very well at the beginning.

(Facilitator 4)

Discussions within the peer group can therefore be a positive learning experience for the children (as described in Chapter Five). However, in order to be implemented successfully, facilitators need to be skilled at responding to the immediate learning needs of the group, as indicated in the quote above.

Facilitator competencies

Class teachers from Schools A and B credited the successful implementation of the programme to the skills of the facilitators in engaging the children with the material, and to their ability to create a safe and trusting environment in which children could explore the issues, whilst also managing class dynamics:

A few of them had bickering issues as I knew they would do 'cause like I said, the type of pupils they were, but it could have been a whole lot worse. I think the facilitators obviously engaged the children quite well to be able to manage their behaviour. (Class teacher, School A)

I think a brilliant strength, the leaders were fantastic, really, really made the children at ease. (Class teacher, School B)

Whilst the competencies of facilitators emerged as a significant factor for successful implementation (see Chapter Five), one of the facilitators described the advantages of delivering the programme in pairs, lending support to the argument for co-delivery with others who are familiar with the material:

What is great about it, whenever you're doing it, whether it's a partner from another organisation or a Tender person, is that you've got somebody else in the room that's got your back and can take over when you are lost and particularly if you get into a place where you can't see the woods for the trees in terms of messages. It's really useful working with a man because of modelling good, equal, supportive behaviour.
(Facilitator 5)

Children's learning

As noted above, all three teachers identified the value of teaching children relationships education, particularly to children on the verge of moving to secondary school. Although teachers were not explicitly asked how the programme had impacted on the children's learning, the teacher at School C described how she perceived the programme had impacted on one child's learning:

I know when we were filling in the forms, one of the children hadn't filled something in to begin with about Charlie, and he was really proud to be able to say 'no she shouldn't send that picture' and he was quite pleased and I think that's really positive that he felt he was able to answer that question and he knew a bit more about that scenario. (Class teacher, School C)

However, this teacher commented that she was doubtful of the effectiveness of the assembly presented to younger children in the school at the end of the programme:

I think sometimes it was a little bit lost with the other year groups, but I don't think you would be able to have the children's own work and then presenting it to the other children without some of it being a bit lost in translation. And also things like, I know one of the groups is very quiet, so I'm not sure actually if the children heard. They were more than happy to watch, but I don't know if they really understood.

(Class teacher, School C)

Similar criticisms were raised by children in the focus group discussions who felt that they lacked sufficient preparation time and ownership for this task. The following observations support the suggestion in the excerpt above that the assembly presentation at this school was confusing for some of the children in the audience:

Observation notes – School C

Day 2 - Assembly presentation

MC= male child (in audience), FC = female child (in audience), FF= female facilitator

At 14.30 the two other Year 6 classes and all the Year 5 children arrive in the hall to watch the children's presentation. Each of the groups proceed to perform their rehearsed scenarios.

At the end of the performance the children in the audience are asked to say what they learnt from the play, but there is a sense that the intended messages were not fully understood by some children in the audience, for example one girl in the audience stated:

FC: *'I learnt not to break promises.'*

This was counter to the message that the performing children were trying to convey.

There is also a sense that some children in the audience are left feeling a little confused about the purpose of some of the scenarios and the performance as a whole, for example one boy in the audience asked:

MC: *'What was the red flag play about?'*

Another boy in the audience asked:

MC: *'What's this for?'*

FF: *'What do you think it's for?'*

MC: *'Anti bullying week?'*

At 14.53 (23 minutes after the start) the assembly ends and the children return to their classroom.

However, these misunderstandings were not evident in other schools. Moreover, one facilitator believed that messages can be particularly memorable for those children who are presenting the material and the value of performance in ensuring messages are retained through the embodiment of knowledge is a key technique drawn from theories of educational drama (Jackson and Vine, 2013):

I also think the fact that there's the presentation afterwards, obviously that helps others in the school learn a little bit at that time, but there's nothing that makes something stick with you better than if you're put in the position where you have to do it, where you have to share it, where you have to commit it to memory or commit it to at least be able to present in that moment. (Facilitator 3)

Facilitators also identified the broader impacts of the programme on the children's learning in relation to increased understanding of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour, as well as an increase in their vocabulary to help them to be able to define a situation:

...the term 'peer pressure' - before there was 'peer pressure' it must be very hard for a child to describe what they were feeling when they felt compelled to do something that everyone else was doing, but they don't know how to phrase it - and now, 'Oh, it's peer pressure, they're peer pressuring me'. (Facilitator 4)

...by the end of the second day there were students who were having conversations where there were conflicts coming up ...and like I heard one student use 'red flag' as like a jokey thing to another student, and then another student had been like 'she's telling me that I can't do the...' and he was like 'red flag!'. And so they clearly are listening, understanding and using them, but it still feels like they're using them on a surface level. (Facilitator 6)

Being equipped with the relevant language to name or label abusive behaviour enables otherwise acceptable behaviour to be unacceptable and therefore challengeable (Kelly, 1988). The children described in the extracts above appear to be better equipped to identify

and label behaviour they experience as such. One parent reported their understanding of how the programme had improved their child's awareness of acceptable behaviour, whilst another parent commented on how their child had become more empathetic towards other members of the class:

...he probably has more understanding what is allowed and what is not allowed - how can your friends act next year, what is allowed, what shouldn't happen. (Parent 3, School 3)

[Child's name] definitely did say that she didn't realise some of the issues that some of the other children, and she said 'Now I sort of understand why'. I think it helps them to be more tolerant with each other and [child's name] said 'Now I understand about so and so' and that, and I think that helped her. (Parent, School A)

However, one of the facilitators reported some reservations about whether children were able to translate the programme messages to situations they encountered in their own lives:

I just think they have a disconnect of 'Oh they don't mean this person that I'm in class with, I can say mean things to them' you know, it doesn't quite get that it's everybody, every person that you come into contact with. (Facilitator 3)

Improving schools' readiness to implement programme messages after programmes end, may help the translation of messages encountered during programmes into children's everyday lives. As Keddle (2008) suggests, building awareness among teachers means they would be more able to respond to incidents occurring within the classroom and actively encourage children to contextualise their learning so it becomes meaningful and relevant to their lives.

Improved relationships within the classroom

Observation of programme delivery showed that teachers had the opportunity to get to know the children in a way that might not otherwise be feasible since, *'it allows them to notice things about their students that wouldn't come up in ordinary conversations or*

ordinary teaching days.' (Facilitator 3). This was substantiated by teachers at Schools A and B, who were unfamiliar with the children at the start of the school year when the programme was being implemented:

I felt it was quite useful to be able to step back and see how they were interacting because it's right at the start of the term, so I don't know them that well either. So it was quite useful to watch their interactions. (Class teacher, School A)

I'm glad I was there in an observatory supportive role because I got to see my class, and bits of feelings and what's going on for them - stuff I don't often get chance to do. A one hour slot of PSHE doesn't get you a good feel of your class. You need to see them talking about their home life, to come off timetable like that, and just spend time talking and acting. (Class teacher, School B)

Adopting the observer/support role during programme delivery allows teachers to become more familiar with the children and their circumstances, and this creates opportunities for them to be more open to picking up any safeguarding concerns. This links back to the earlier discussion in this chapter around the importance of involving teachers in programmes so that disclosures can be identified and followed up.

Before the programme, the teacher based in the Catholic school reported that she lacked the confidence and felt ill-equipped to deal with the issues raised in the programme, possibly due to the perceived constraints within the Catholic setting. Following the programme, the teacher described feeling better equipped and more permitted to talk about these issues with the children in her class:

I feel a lot more confident to talk about it than I did before 'cause before, coming to a Catholic school, I thought 'Oh my god' you know, we don't talk about this stuff, but now they've experienced it and I saw that they're different... seeing how well they coped, I feel a lot more confident...before I'd think 'I am not touching this with a barge pole'. You know we've become quite a healthy, emotional (laugh) kind of, out there class, where we just put it all out there (laugh) and deal with it. But everybody

that's come in the last two days has said 'Wow! What's happened here?' (Class teacher, School B)

This teacher reported significant positive changes in the behaviour and attitudes of the children in the class:

...I've noticed a change in them since last week. They're more subdued, they're more respectful. We've had a couple of incidents with children falling out, but they've been a lot more emotional than they were before. Before they'd have a row and they'd be 'Hmm, well you know'. It's been really weird to watch. They're really affected because they're talking to each other about how they're making them feel now, which I thought was fascinating. So since last week, there's been a real shift in them. (Class teacher, School B)

Children participating in the focus groups also described that relationships among the class peer group had improved directly after the programme. Similar findings were reported by Reid Howie Associates (2002) who found that the majority of young people in their study believed they had learned more about respect for each other.

In contrast, the teacher at School A reported a lack of explicit behaviour change among the children in her class, but recognised that any impact may not be obvious or immediate:

... I haven't seen any change in them in terms of how they relate to each other. I haven't seen, but it might be that the impact is felt somewhere later on 'cause they've been given a lot of information. It could be that there are things happening and we didn't have any disclosures, but there could, maybe something could be bubbling up now and that will come later, or it could be that it just takes a little bit longer to digest - but the impact is definitely not felt immediately. (Class teacher, School A)

This emphasises the need for longer term follow up of programme impact and the need to look at outcomes beyond disclosures, such as a broader consideration of the effect on children's emotional literacy and well-being as outlined in the Government's recent guidance on children's mental health strategy (DfE, 2018b).

Sustaining programme messages

Teacher training was not offered to staff in primary schools around the topics covered in the programme. However, as noted above, all the class teachers or teaching assistants were present throughout the delivery of the programme, and through their observations, teachers were able to experience and learn about the programme topics in a similar way to the children. Teachers were also able to utilise their observer role for their own training purposes and to *'learn from some of the ways in which they got the information from the children, the way they present information.'* This meant that learning was restricted to those teachers who were present in the classroom at the time of delivery, and as such, opportunities to share those messages with other school staff were limited. In School B, although the Head teacher had suggested that the programme messages be shared more widely throughout the school, the class teacher thought this would be a difficult task due to the complexity of the material, and that this might be better achieved through specific staff training:

The training for me was really being there and being part of the course. But it's quite difficult to, like the Head was saying, 'Are there elements you can share with the rest of the school?' and there are certain things, but it's such an in depth kind of thing that they did...I would appreciate a day's training,...not just watching it, but actually see their thought processes of where they're going and how they're going to tackle that...the pedagogy behind it as well... (Class teacher, School B)

As noted above, improving schools' readiness to sustain programme messages, may be achieved by adopting a holistic 'whole school' approach (Keddie, 2008; Maxwell, 2010) which would include whole staff training. Such an approach is embedded within schools, rather than supplementary through stand-alone programmes. On this basis, teachers

embrace a whole school approach, by challenging inequality and violence when it happens in schools. Teachers in Schools A and B had already begun to incorporate some of the concepts and methods used in the programme into their own teaching, and PSHE was identified by teachers in Schools A and C as the area of the school curriculum where concepts would be most easily integrated. It is significant that only the teacher from School A described how she was attempting to sustain the impact of the programme by making it visible to the children how their behaviours could be connected to the concepts raised in the programme, thereby making the children's learning more meaningful to their everyday lives:

I've put up some of their work for display already on the side there, some of the things they've done and I think what we'll do is incorporate it into our PSHE work that we do, just to remind them of some of the issues that came up. And I do speak to them, I mean throughout the week since they've been I've said, 'Do you remember what you did on the workshop? Think about the solutions you could think...', you know, all the different activities, just to remind them that it was actually a purpose, there was a purpose for it, it wasn't just a workshop and then move on. It's supposed to have an impact and that you're supposed to be able to use that as a resource to help you in your relationships. (Class teacher, School A)

Additionally, this teacher reported that it would have been helpful to have been left with some further resources to utilise after the programme had ended.

The teacher at School B spoke about how she had adopted some of the methods she had observed during the programme to inform her teaching, but didn't report drawing upon any of the programmes concepts, possibly because as a Catholic school, PSHE wasn't '*a massive focus in this school*':

...so for me also to change my teaching, 'cause I'm thinking they're really into that role play, I need to really include more of that in my teaching...I pinched the clap thing, the concentration game...we did a name game thing which is where they have to go round pointing and saying each other names but in a certain style of voice, 'cause I was really fascinated by that style.... (Class teacher, School B)

The teacher at School C was also the school PSHE lead, a role that she had undertaken the previous school year, at a point where the school *'weren't doing very much at all'*. Since then, the teacher had written a programme of PSHE study for all year groups, and sex and relationships education had also been reintroduced into the curriculum, whilst the school was also currently engaged in *'launching the right to respect'*. As such, this teacher was strongly committed to making the PSHE curriculum a success in school, and as noted above, when the Business Manager arranged with Tender to implement the programme in the school, the teacher commented that *'I think she thought it was a good project for them to do and for me to observe'*. There was some sense of anticipation, therefore, that the programme would help to strengthen the school's developing PSHE curriculum by linking the work with other initiatives in their school. This was acknowledged when the class teacher described how the programme topics could usefully feed in and *'overlap'* with their current PSHE curriculum, and how some of the programme topics could be incorporated into their PSHE lessons:

...it was feeding into the PSHE then more than anything...I feel like when we do again, do our SRE and things like that, it would support to refer back to the Charlie scenario, I think there will be some more overlap. Again it's to do with the PSHE.

(Class teacher, School C)

However, the teacher at School C did not specifically report that any of the programme concepts or methods had been used or incorporated in her class at the time that the interviews took place the week following the programme. This may have been due to the teacher's perception that the programme did not contribute very much to either the staff or the children's existing knowledge: *'there were things that we were already familiar with, and the children already knew actually, and most of the stage 2 children already knew the ChildLine number and things like that'*. However, there is also a suggestion in the quote above, that PSHE is approached as a distinct subject, rather than a subject where learning can take place across the school curriculum. As a result, opportunities to sustain programme impact by integrating programme messages into children's daily lives, may have been overlooked. This may highlight the benefits of offering staff training so that a programme's approach to developing children's prosocial attitudes and behaviour, is understood by school staff, as well as supporting staff to identify where the future

opportunities lie in raising issues and making connections to the work across the curriculum.

Furthermore, it was widely acknowledged by the facilitators, but also by one of the parents and the class teacher at School A, that in order to be sustained, programme messages needed to be repeated and heard by children continually, over an extended period of time:

Course it's positive especially when they hear the same thing over and over again. It's the best way of remembering things again and again and again. (Parent 2, School C)

...everyone wants to commodify it, everything, and then package it up and then go 'We've done that'. Humans aren't like that, we learn continuously, do you know what I mean? It should be sustained now actually, when these were in Year 6 and they're going to go into secondary school next year, or whatever, and when they get to secondary school, Year 8, Year 9, they'll get another kind of Tender, or we'd like to think they'd get another Tender kind of type input...but you know I think this work should be intrinsic to children's learning. (Facilitator 2)

As well as repeating these messages on a continuous basis, one facilitator acknowledged the importance of the values and culture of a school in order that positive messages are sustained once the programme has ended:

I've talked to kids in primary school, or maybe secondary schools, where intimidation's happening at the time we're talking about it - someone's intimidating somebody else, or me - and I'm saying, 'We're here talking about this and you're doing it, you find it acceptable when you've agreed it isn't acceptable'...so what I'm doing is hugely undermined to begin with. (Facilitator 4)

As noted above, in order to be sustained, programme concepts need to be integrated into the school curriculum, therefore emphasising the need for teachers and parents to be closely involved so they are better equipped to incorporate programme methods and

content in their future work. This would require relevant training for teachers at the qualifying and post qualifying levels, which is currently insufficient (Ollis et al., 2013). Schools may be better prepared to achieve this through the introduction of compulsory Relationships Education for primary school children and government's emphasis on taking a 'whole-school approach' (DfE, 2018).

Adult Interview Findings Summary

- Schools' readiness to engage in the implementation and sustainability of the programme messages emerged as an important theme. Improving schools' readiness by ensuring that the aims of the programme are recognised and understood may help staff to accept the material as relevant for children.
- At a broader level, schools' readiness to incorporate the material in the primary school curriculum is more likely to be achieved through the introduction of mandatory Relationships Education.
- Preparing children in advance by including them in this process may facilitate children's engagement in topics beforehand. Facilitators' readiness to allow children more control and ownership of the learning process is likely to enhance their experience and engagement.
- Improving parents' readiness by ensuring they are aware of the programmes aims may help families to reinforce messages at home and increase programmes' impact.
- Teachers across the three participating schools viewed the programme aims and content as suitable for children aged 10 to 11 despite some initial concerns expressed by staff in two schools in relation to teaching on sexual abuse.
- The peer group setting offers children opportunities for experiential learning, however tensions that can occur within the group dynamic and/or unfavourable attitudes expressed by group members need to be handled skilfully by facilitators.
- Teachers expressed some concern around the intensive two day structure, whilst one teacher believed that this helped maintain children's engagement and momentum. Time constraints caused tension between ensuring topics were covered whilst providing children with opportunities to explore the material.
- Teachers expressed a preference for this subject-matter to be taught by external agencies citing a lack of confidence and expertise to deal with the issues. Teachers can potentially enhance children's experience by raising issues relating to children's

prior learning in school, although inappropriate or excessive teacher involvement can lead to a lack of ownership for children and undermine programme messages.

- Improved relationships among children can occur as a consequence of engagement in discussion and interaction during programme delivery. Through their observations, teachers can become more familiar with children in their class thus creating opportunities for teachers to pick up on safeguarding concerns.
- In order to maximise children's learning, messages should be repeated continuously and become intrinsic to children's learning and programme concepts should be integrated within the school curriculum subsequently.

In the following chapter, Chapter Seven, children's and adults' experiences and perspectives, as described here and in previous chapters, will be compared and synthesised.

CHAPTER SEVEN: DISCUSSION

Introduction

The context in which this study took place changed with key developments in government policy. An amendment to the Children and Social Work Bill on 1 March 2017 confirmed that Relationships Education was to be made compulsory for all pupils receiving primary education and Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) for pupils in secondary education, initially with effect from September 2019 (DfE, 2017). Publication of the draft statutory guidance and regulations in July 2018 confirmed that statutory status would commence in September 2020 following a period of consultation and parliamentary approval of the proposed guidance (DfE, 2018). The consultation enquiry sought opinion and guidance on the proposals set out in the draft statutory guidance with the aim of providing answers to key questions around how the work would be implemented including the proposed content of Relationships Education and RSE, how schools should engage with parents on the content of teaching, and delivery and teaching strategies. The issue of parental rights to opt children out of Sex Education as part of RSE in secondary schools was also discussed. In primary schools, Sex Education is not compulsory and the guidance for this age group focusses solely on Relationships Education.

Although it is confirmed that Relationship Education will now be mandatory in all primary schools in England and Wales from September 2020, there is little evidence about which programmes are acceptable or effective – only a selection of suggested resources are offered in Governments draft guidance (DfE, 2018) - or how programmes are best delivered to children in this age group. Interventions aiming to prevent domestic violence have been developed and widely implemented both in the UK and internationally, yet most studies focus on young people in secondary education. Although programmes have increasingly been delivered to younger children in primary schools, few have been formally evaluated for their effectiveness and as such, evidence for the impact of prevention work in primary schools is currently limited (Stanley et al., 2015). Programme evaluations which do exist for children in this age group were either conducted over ten years ago (i.e. Datta et al., 2005; Ellis, 2006) or differ in their focus. For example, research conducted by Tutty (1997, 2000) focused solely on the prevention of child sexual abuse, while a programme evaluated by Hale et al. (2012) focused principally on the topic of domestic violence prevention. As such, no up-to-date research exists on programmes which tackle the wider range of forms of

violence and abuse and it is these integrated programmes which are now most likely to be delivered in the Relationships Education curriculum. In light of this, the current study makes an original contribution to the existing knowledge base by providing much needed evidence around whether integrated programmes, such as Tender's, can provide an effective means of enabling younger children to recognise and respond effectively to different forms of violence and how programmes are best delivered to children in this age group. However, as this study is based on three London schools, findings discussed in this chapter may not be applicable to the wider population of 10 to 11-year-old children (see Limitations section in Chapter Three).

This chapter presents a synthesis of the findings in relation to the existing literature and is structured using the three principal research questions:

1. Can preventive school-based programmes improve younger children's knowledge and skills to enable them to recognise different forms of violence, including domestic violence towards themselves and others?
2. How can impact be achieved for younger children and what forms of delivery influence outcomes?
3. How can the views of children and adults inform the development of relationships education in primary schools?

Discussion of the findings in respect of these three questions is organised under the headings: Outcomes and Impact; Mechanisms and Processes; and Conditions for Effective Implementation. The chapter ends with a discussion of the study's contribution to theoretical knowledge in this field.

Outcomes and impact: what do younger children learn?

Like other school-based prevention programmes evaluated to date (Bell and Stanley, 2006; DMSS, 2012; Ellis, 2006; Reid Howie Associates, 2002), outcomes for the programme studied here focus on increasing children's awareness and understanding of healthy and unhealthy relationships and on improving their knowledge of where and how to seek support, so children are better equipped to protect and support themselves from various forms of

abuse. Affective learning in the form of developing empathy and respectful relationships, increasing confidence and empowerment, and communicating in effective and non-violent ways are also identified as key outcomes. A wide range of topics are addressed within the programme including: positive friendships; gender equality and power in relationships; communication and conflict management; early warning signs of abuse; children's rights; peer pressure; staying safe from sexual abuse; secrets; and help seeking and support. However, there is perhaps a need to raise the question about how well integrated programmes with multiple aims and diverse content such as the programme evaluated for this study are able to tackle domestic violence which is distinguished from most other forms of abuse and harm by the extent to which it is understood as a manifestation of gender inequality (see discussion under '*Gender as obscured in prevention programmes*' in Chapter Two). This could be an issue for Relationships Education, particularly as the types of negative behaviour relating to violence are rarely named or addressed in the current Government guidance (DfE, 2018). It is therefore unlikely that domestic violence will be explicitly addressed within relationships education, particularly in the context of a public health approach towards prevention where a focus on domestic violence and gender is arguably diluted (Flood, 2009). As discussed in Chapter Two, the promotion of feminist discourses, which clearly address gender inequality and gendered power relations, is understood as essential in the prevention of domestic violence (Flood et al., 2009; Lombard and Harris, 2017; Reed et al., 2010).

Tackling Gender

As with other school-based programmes addressing domestic violence and relationship violence (Bell and Stanley, 2006; DMSS, 2012; Ellis, 2006; Meiksin et al., 2020), the programme studied here has a broadly feminist underpinning to explain why domestic violence in relationships occur. The current programme addresses gender equality through an activity which occurs on the first day of the programme (see earlier account of this task under '*Programme Outline*' in Chapter Three). Findings outlined in the previous chapters suggest that this approach was less successful in encouraging children to explore gender inequality and how this shapes relationships and children did not ascribe power to job roles as expected. Children may have benefited from a clearer explanation of the concept of 'power' both in relation to gendered stereotypical job roles and their economic status, and how 'power' may affect relationships. Although the task provided a route into a discussion

around gender stereotypes, the link between the task and understanding and identifying equality within relationships, was not made by children in the way it was intended. As noted by one facilitator, outlined in Chapter Six, the programme's approach to tackling gender through this exercise '*depends on the knowledge in the group*'. Involving children in discussions around gender roles and gendered attitudes based on abstract teaching around adult job roles or intimate relationships, which children haven't yet embarked on, means that children's learning is not situated within their own lived experience. As suggested in previous studies, children are more likely to engage in material that is relevant, authentic and connected with their own lives so that messages are not disregarded or misunderstood (Fox et al., 2014; Reid Howie Associates, 2002; Stanley, Ellis and Bell, 2011; Stanley et al., 2015). Involving children in the design of programmes is more likely to ensure that content is more relevant to children and their experiences.

Although content around gender equality and equality within relationships was addressed by the Tender programme, the fact that men are overwhelmingly the perpetrators of violence as a consequence of gender inequality was, perhaps intentionally, not made explicit, and it appeared that children did not make the link between the two. Similar findings were reported by Ollis (2014), who reported that secondary school students (age 13 to 15) were unable to identify that gender-based violence was a cause of unequal power relations: rather their understanding reflected common misconceptions of the causes of violence such as alcohol, drugs and past experiences. As Fox et al. (2014) argue, a gendered approach needs to be delivered 'thoughtfully' to ensure that boys do not feel alienated, and for this reason, as well as ensuring girls are not left feeling troubled, the lack of explicitness in conceptualising relationship abuse in terms of gender inequality may have been intentional. Yet, this concept was seemingly more clearly defined for children during an unplanned discussion raised by a teacher (see '*Teachers' roles*' in Chapter Six) in which children engaged in and were stimulated by a direct discussion around the gendered nature of violence. Once the topic had been raised, a male facilitator was able to incorporate the subject of the gendered nature of domestic violence into the unplanned discussion in a way that appeared acceptable to children. Although some studies suggest that teachers can inadvertently discourage children's participation if they are too actively involved in programmes for children (Fox et al., 2014), this example demonstrates how teachers can help target discussions so that they are directly relevant to children's prior learning.

As suggested in previous research, the pairing of male and female facilitators in school-based programmes shows sensitivity to the potential risk of resistance by boys towards a

gendered understanding of interpersonal violence (Wolfe et al., 2009). The fact that children appeared to be interested and stimulated by this discussion, and that none of the children, particularly none of the boys, resisted the message around the gendered nature of domestic violence, may be a consequence of its relevance to children's prior learning and its delivery by a male, as opposed to a female facilitator. The male/female dynamic adopted by this and other prevention programmes can provide a means by which gender is implicitly addressed, via the relationships demonstrated by the male and female facilitators, through respectful communication, equal status and turn-taking, and through the modelling of alternative masculinities (Bell and Stanley, 2006). This could be difficult to replicate for teachers delivering relationships education in primary schools where teachers are usually female. Gender awareness can also be increased through activities including discussions around gender stereotypes and opportunities for mixed-sex tasks. However, unless programmes engage children in discussions which make the link between gendered attitudes and abuse within relationships, children are unlikely to make the connection themselves.

Other key changes in knowledge and awareness

Children's responses to the survey questions suggest that before the programme, children already held 'desirable' attitudes around some key concepts including: equality in relationships; ways to manage conflict; recognising and responding to peer pressure and bullying; and seeking help. Children may be confident in their attitudes towards these concepts because they relate directly to their own lived experiences: for example, most children believed that 'Mums and Dads should both be able to have a job if they want to' and this may reflect children's experiences within their own families where both parents have paid work. Likewise, as bullying prevention work is well developed in schools (see Chapter Two), children's positive attitudes towards how they should respond to bullying may be a reflection of the extent to which this concept is already talked about with children. As schools are required to include anti-bullying measures within school behaviour policies, and as schools are further encouraged to engage in anti-bullying initiatives to fulfil this requirement (DCSF, 2009; DfE, 2017), children are likely to be familiar with the concept and understand that this form of peer abuse is not tolerated in schools, although this is less likely to apply to sexual bullying in primary schools. Children's awareness of the wider concepts

addressed within relationships education, and the extent to which they are internalised, could be increased by clearly positioning work within school policy frameworks and priorities (Manship and Perry, 2012). This could be an important mechanism for contributing to shifts in social norms and behaviours at both the individual and school level (see WHO, 2009; Bellis et al., 2012).

Before the programme, children expressed less 'desirable' attitudes towards other concepts, including: recognising differences between good and bad touch; challenging adult authority; keeping secrets; and knowing when to break friends' promises. These concepts are key to children's understanding around self-protection (saying 'No' to authority figures) and seeking help for themselves and other children (telling secrets) and children's existing attitudes towards these concepts indicate that these topics do not get talked about effectively with children. The fact that children were less confident in their attitudes towards these safeguarding concepts before the programme argues the need for children to learn about these issues at school, as a significant proportion of children do not appear to be learning these at home or elsewhere. Similarities can be drawn between these findings and those of Tutty (2000), who found that, across a number of studies of sexual abuse prevention programmes for elementary school children, concepts which presented the most difficulty at pre-test or at follow up included (amongst others), saying 'No' to authority figures and knowing rules about breaking promises and keeping secrets.

In the current study, positive change was evident in respect of three of the four concepts where children expressed less 'desirable' attitudes before the programme, with the most discernible change occurring around children's attitudes towards breaking friends' promises. This finding demonstrates a favourable shift in children's understanding that to break promises in order to support their peers is a positive action and this signifies a valuable outcome in relation to children's learning.

Disappointingly, there was no evidence of progression in children's learning around the concept of keeping secrets more broadly. Moreover, there was evidence of regression amongst some of the boys, indicating that children's attitudes around confidentiality had not shifted as expected. This lack of improvement may be a result of the somewhat ambiguous nature of the survey statement: 'You always have to keep secrets', where the nature of the secrets was not made explicit. However, as described in Chapter Five, opportunities for children to explore the core message around being permitted to break secrets that make them feel uncomfortable or unsafe were inadequate. This lack of shift in attitudes around

the concept of keeping secrets when the nature of the secret is not specified, is likely to reflect the complexity for children in recognising that secrets are multifaceted and the circumstances under which secrets should be exposed. Limited clarity for children around this complex concept, as observed during the programme delivery, suggests that in order for children to learn these lessons, messages need to be expressed clearly and unambiguously, and opportunities for children to fully explore complex concepts need to be provided. Nevertheless, as noted above, children did make gains in their understanding around being permitted to break secrets within the context of supporting a friend, indicating that children are able to integrate these difficult concepts when the circumstances around when secrets should be broken are made clear.

Although the broader concept of keeping and breaking secrets is less clear for children, in relation to accessing support by speaking out and asking for help, boys and girls across two schools talked about help seeking as a key area where their learning had been enhanced. Children from these schools were able to recall not only that support was available but more specifically, who and where they might go to for support. To this end, the programme, like that evaluated by Bell and Stanley (2006), appears to have been successful in encouraging children to identify realistic means of support, with children identifying parents, teachers, friends or ChildLine as accessible sources. Furthermore, children appeared to accept the idea that seeking help is not only permissible but is the right thing to do if they felt uncomfortable or unsafe and that they would be supported if they did so. This is a valuable outcome in relation to children's knowledge, but also in relation to their affective learning since these attitudes reflect children's positive beliefs towards challenging the concealment of abuse and proactive attitudes towards help seeking. Children's attitudes towards the availability of support remained positive but had weakened slightly by six months, as evidenced from responses to the survey; longer term evaluation would be required to assess the extent to which these wider learning outcomes had been retained.

Two disclosures were made by children, as reported by teachers one week following the programme. In a mapping study of school programmes aimed at preventing domestic violence, Stanley et al., (2015) identified two evaluations reporting the prevalence of disclosures (Reid Howie, 2001 and Ellis, 2006). Of these, only Ellis' (2006) evaluation reported the number of disclosures occurring during the period of the programme with 11 of 532 children/young people disclosing child abuse or domestic violence. Ellis (2015) described this ratio of 1:48 as low when compared to research by Radford et al. (2011) which suggests that one in six children and young people experience domestic violence at

some point in their childhood. In the current study, two of 82 children (a ratio of approximately 1:41) could also be regarded as relatively low when considering the reported number of children who experience abuse (Radford et al., 2011), although it is acknowledged that disclosure of harm is often a process that occurs over time and the occurrence of these disclosures were reported within one week of the programme. Yet, children talked about help seeking as a key area where their learning had been enhanced, and this relatively small proportion of disclosures could reflect the need for programmes to ensure that safeguarding concepts relate directly to children's own lived experiences so that children can make connections between programme material and their current lives. As suggested above, involving children in the design and development of programmes, may be one way of ensuring this happens.

However, findings from the focus group data and observations of class discussions suggest that confidentiality in respect of disclosure is a significant factor for children, as some children raised questions around the consequences of help seeking. As well as increasing children's knowledge around the availability and permissibility of seeking support, such messages are susceptible to resistance if children do not feel confident about what will happen if they speak out (discussed further below under '*Mechanisms and processes for achieving impact*'). Furthermore, children were critical of learning they considered to be superficial, for example, messages that simply repeated, rather than built on, their previous learning (such as the availability of ChildLine as a source of support), without receiving further information about what would happen if they did access support services. This argues the need for children to be provided with information that is clear and explicit in order to learn effectively, as well as the opportunity to explore unfamiliar concepts in depth and time for questions to be answered satisfactorily. This could be achieved by visiting topics at a later stage, for example with their teachers, if time is not available for extended discussions during the delivery of programmes.

To a lesser extent, a positive shift in children's learning was also evident around the concept of being permitted to challenge adult authority by not always being required to do what adults tell them, with clearer evidence of learning among the girls immediately following the programme. Interestingly, six months after the programme, girls and boys across all three schools showed much greater confidence in their attitudes towards this concept, suggesting that this may be an area of understanding that becomes more recognisable to children as they develop over time. Development theories relating to children's cognitive and moral development have been associated with children's ability to integrate difficult concepts,

particularly in sexual abuse prevention programmes (Meyer, 2007). For example, a child's ability to recognise when to challenge adult authority is identified as one domain of moral development (Damon, 1988). Understanding that sometimes children may need to challenge adult authority by speaking out and telling secrets is a complex concept and one which is counter to societal norms about trusting adults and dominant constructions of children as 'innocent' (Jenks, 1996). Due to the complexity of these concepts, existing studies suggest that programmes should emphasise only one or two concepts, particularly when programmes are short (Tutty, 2000). However, the challenge for programme designers is how complex prevention messages aimed at empowering children through an understanding of their rights, and which encourage them to speak out and challenge adults when needed, can be delivered in the school context where children often exercise very little power (Mayall, 2002). As noted above, children's requirement for more information and clarity around what happens when they ask for help and providing children with appropriate space and time to explore this, may offer a way forward. As suggested in previous studies (Tutty, 2000), when introducing complex prevention concepts, which are difficult for children to learn, they may require time for additional discussion, as well as the repetition of ideas, once such concepts have been introduced (Rispen et al., 1997). This may be achieved by adopting a holistic whole school approach to include teacher training, so staff are better prepared pick up these concepts once a programme ends (Ollis et al., 2013).

Changes in affective learning

A key objective of the programme studied is to promote affective change so that children develop confidence and empowerment and have respectful relationships with their peers. Children participating in the focus groups, talked explicitly about feeling increased confidence through their development of skills and competencies to manage potentially harmful situations. This sense of preparedness was achieved by providing opportunities to practice scenarios through role play, and this is discussed further below.

Feeling better informed about the nature of healthy friendships and improved relationships in the classroom was significant particularly among boys and girls at one school, as well as for the class teacher, where it was recognised that an increase in mutual respect amongst peers, and between the children and the teacher, had contributed to a more positive climate within the classroom. This could be attributed to interactive methods of programme

delivery, which provided children with opportunities to work together, share ideas and learn from each other. This approach also provided unique opportunities for teachers to become more familiar with children in their class and to understand '*what's going on for them*'. Children also spoke about feeling better connected with teachers and this newly found stability, trust and connectedness (see Durlak et al., 2011; Midford et al., 2017; Thomas et al., 2016) may be an outcome of participative and proximal learning methods involving personal interaction, providing children and teachers the opportunity to develop more positive relationships.

Mechanisms and processes: how can impact be achieved for younger children?

Children as active learners

The programme studied aimed to empower children by promoting learning through active participation and enabling children to recognise and assert their rights. Consistent with previous research findings (Bell and Stanley, 2006; CRG Research, 2009; DMSS, 2012), interactive and participative methods of learning were valued highly by children and these methods emerged as an essential component in their enjoyment and engagement. This was evident in children's responses to survey questions addressing satisfaction with the programme, and by findings from the children's focus groups where children described drama and games as effective tools for learning and engagement, as well as through observations of children's responses to these activities. These participative methods provide children with a unique learning experience, distinct from the more traditional approach adopted by schools where learning takes place through sitting quietly and listening to teachers, talking in response to their questions and written work. The opportunity to actively participate in games and activity for the purpose of learning was valued highly, and in response, children were committed to the learning experience.

Reflecting on how their learning occurred, children described the value of active learning both in relation to being provided with opportunities to experience situations first hand through their engagement in role play and games, but also through the observation of scenes presented to them by their peers and programme facilitators, whereby children learnt through others '*showing examples*'. Drama-based activities provide opportunities to

recognise feelings associated with a rehearsed situation and through their active experience, children described feeling better equipped with the skills to identify and manage potentially harmful situations. In this context, learning experiences are enhanced through direct engagement with the activities and as such, it is the performative nature of learning that is key – children learn by actively doing, rather than through passive listening. These techniques, drawn from educational drama, can facilitate children's understanding by providing opportunities to step into the shoes of the characters so that learning becomes more relevant (Bolton, 1993). Educational drama as a key pedagogical approach within Theatre in Education (TIE) (see description in Chapter Two), involves the active participation of children, in drama activities (Jackson and Vine, 2013). The approach has the capacity to empower children through their acquisition of embodied knowledge and skills to recognise potentially harmful situations and by engaging them in material that has relevance and meaning to their own lives (Jackson, 1993). As suggested in previous studies, children's engagement is further enhanced through the perceived authenticity of programme messages (Stanley et al., 2015), whereby messages are delivered by those with relevant experience rather than '*someone just saying the words*' (Girl, School C). Similar findings are reported in a recent study of a theatre-based prevention programme for secondary school students in which young people reported the value of hearing real spoken accounts of teenagers' own experiences of relationship abuse (McElwee and Fox, 2020).

The strategy of whole class improvisation, which includes the teacher or facilitator as 'teacher-in-role'¹⁹, was used in the programme, to attempt to recreate a situation representing that which might happen in real life (see '*Methods of Delivery*', in Chapter Five). Bolton (1993:41) noted that, in this type of improvisation and 'whole group experiencing', children are using an 'experiential mode' in which they are 'both submissive and detached, for they are both participants and percipients' – although they behave as though the situation is real, they are aware that it is fiction. It is through the balancing of the real and imagined world, that experience and learning takes place; however, it is only through reflection on the experience that changes in understanding can occur. Although reflection can be beneficial for children after the experience, Bolton suggests that greater potential may lie in reflection *during* the experience – the teacher-in-role (or in this case the facilitator) can pause the improvisation to invite the class to consider the remarks and situation of the character before the fiction resumes and refers to this as 'spectator in the

¹⁹ Teacher-in-role allows the teacher to take part in the drama, usually in a low-status role

head'; as both 'participants and percipients', children are watching themselves making sense of and resolving the issue.

Children were given opportunities to reflect during improvisations and were invited to explore the situation faced by the characters, thus children were valued as thoughtful and active learners rather than being given simplistic messages about what the characters might do. By engaging in this task, expressing empathy towards characters and by offering appropriate advice and support, children demonstrated a grasp on the issue being tackled and, in this sense, the method appeared to be appropriate for children of this age. However, although the character was authentic and relatable to children when situated in the fictional world, the content, which centred on the 10 year old character being pressured to send inappropriate images on line, was not relatable in the context of real life for some children who saw this as an issue for '*older people*', and for children who reported being unfamiliar with the idea of sending indecent images (discussed under '*Programme Content*' below). As noted above, for authenticity to be achieved, programmes need to ensure that material is relatable and although children may not have experienced situations themselves, their engagement may be enhanced if messages are delivered by other children with relevant experience, for example through hearing direct accounts from other young people (McElwee and Fox (2020)).

In other drama-based activities, such as short scripted role play, there was some variation between schools in the way that activities were co-ordinated, and this gives some insight into understanding the ways that children were able to engage with these tasks. For example, in a short scene (presented on Day 1 of the programme), entitled 'Waiting' depicting a boy who was late to meet a girl, children across all schools watched and listened attentively when the scene was being performed, either by the facilitators or by their peers. Conversely, only a few children were selected to present this scene to the class and children's own reflections on the programme suggested that those who were not chosen were frustrated by this process. This was one aspect of the programme where children were most critical – children did not like to feel marginalised through not being chosen, or not being given the opportunity to fully immerse themselves. In this case, only children in one school were given the opportunity to rehearse their own scenes in pairs, thus giving all the children the chance to take part, and it is interesting to note that only children in this school specifically recalled this task when they were asked to reflect on their experience of the programme one week later. This lends support to engaging children fully in drama activities in order to enhance the memorability of their learning. Although children value being

treated as thoughtful, active learners, restrictions on the individual child's participation may be unavoidable and can arise from the size of groups and the limited time available in the school setting.

The opportunity for children to reflect on characters' actions and responses during the drama (Bolton, 1993; McNaughton, 2014) took place during the presentation of the scene in two schools in this study, with children raising a 'red flag' to pause the performance when they identified an early warning sign of an unhealthy relationship. Here children were active in their reflection, purposefully watching out for indicators and demonstrating their involvement by holding up their red flag. This approach appeared to be effective in engaging children in the task and ensured that children participated actively in the drama. In contrast, in the third school, where children were invited to reflect *after* the scene was performed, there was a marked difference in children's enthusiasm for the task – children in this school gave few responses to the questions posed by the facilitators and did not appear to be as engaged in the whole group discussion. Affording all children the opportunity to participate, and to actively reflect during the experience, emerged as significant in children's engagement with their learning experience.

Similarly, in a second short scripted drama activity, depicting two friends playing a computer game, children in two of the schools failed to engage meaningfully in the group discussion led by questions from the facilitators which occurred *after* the performance. However, the discussion was more productive in the third school where children were asked to reflect *during* the drama activity and in which they were able to contribute actively by pushing an imaginary 'buzzer' to pause the performance when they recognised instances of emotionally abusive behaviour. Acknowledging children as active learners whose acquirement of knowledge is a dynamic and empowering rather than passive process may ensure that children engage in their learning more fully (James et al., 1998).

Whole group discussion appeared to engage children better when it was used to promote reflection during the drama activity, rather than as a distinct activity after a scene was performed. This method of learning through discussion, also termed 'circle time' (CT) is a widely used intervention for the development of children's social and emotional learning in schools (Cefai et al., 2014) through which children are able to learn and practice skills such as listening, expressing themselves, respecting others and problem solving within a safe, inclusive and democratic environment (Mosley, 2009). The group agree their own ground rules but primarily participants take turns in raising ideas, speaking and listening. The extent

to which children in the three participating schools had previously been exposed to CT as a method of learning was unclear, although as CT was talked about by the teacher in School C, it is assumed that it was, at the least, practiced in this school. Even so, this teacher stated that the children were '*not used to having it that much*' suggesting that CT was not a common method of learning and as such, children were likely to have lacked the necessary skills and experience to utilise this approach. Children's lack of experience in this approach to learning was more evident among children at one school, particularly during a class discussion on gender equality (see section '*Methods of Delivery*', in Chapter Five). Nonetheless, although lack of experience meant that children sometimes found this approach challenging, children in this school found the novelty of whole group discussion appealing, providing them with a unique opportunity to share their ideas and learn from each other, and consequently allowing them to form better relationships with their peers. Furthermore, by affording children the opportunity to engage in class discussions, and thus learn how to talk to each other about the issues raised, it was perceived that children would be more likely to continue their discussions once the programme finished.

Conversely, the issue of adult power and child empowerment is one of the main issues in CT - rather than serving as a mechanism for empowering the child and ensuring their voice is heard, it is suggested that unless implemented appropriately, it may operate as a medium for maintaining adult power and control in the classroom (Leach and Lewis, 2013). For example, as noted above, in this study, children were more likely to engage in discussion when the hierarchy of relations between them and the teacher (teacher-in-role/facilitator) was more equal and children were positioned as active partners in the learning process (pausing drama activities to make a point), rather than when they were asked to respond to adult directed questions after a performance. Similarly, if issues of confidentiality and participation are not properly handled during class discussions, it may lead to a sense of insecurity and exposure among child participants (Cefai et al., 2014), and this lack of trust was identified by one boy as the reason why '*quarter of the class didn't say anything in lessons*' (see '*Peer Group Setting*' in Chapter Five). Thus, in order to be effective, this method needs to be implemented appropriately and requires adult facilitators to generate trust and respect among the group (CRG Research, 2009; Ermentrout et al., 2014; Reid Howie, 2001) as well as ensuring a transfer of power and control to children so that children are active partners in the learning process (James et al., 1998; Jackson and Vine, 2014).

Although drama-based games and activities emerged as a popular method for engagement and learning, these methods were less appealing for children who were uncomfortable with

performing and teachers suggested that more familiar methods of learning, such as using multi-media and visual clips would be better suited to engage those children with less developed language skills. This is supported by findings from other research which highlights the importance of engaging young people with a wide range of media familiar to them, such as programmes they watch and popular music videos (Reid Howie, 2001; Manship and Perry, 2012). However, the majority of children enjoyed the drama-based aspect of the programme, and this contrasts with findings from Fox et al.'s (2014) study in which primary school children did not enjoy role play. In the present study, girls and boys expressed similar views around the appeal of drama, whilst the only criticisms came from a small number of girls who would have preferred less drama and more discussion or written work. This resonates with findings from Bell and Stanley's (2006) study where gender differences were detected amongst Year 8 children (age 12 to 13) with workshops more popular with the girls, whereas the boys preferred drama. As noted above, the majority of children in this study immersed themselves in the drama and games and children's most common criticism was not being selected for games, or to show their drama piece to the class when they were invited to volunteer. Despite this, a subgroup of children across all schools, but most notably girls at School B, expressed anxiety around presenting their work to other classes during an assembly at the end of the programme (see '*Facilitator Characteristics*' in Chapter Five) – children were informed by programme facilitators early on in the programme that they would be presenting their work to other classes, rather than being asked to volunteer, as they had been when asked to present their work in the classroom. The girls in School B were more comfortable, and therefore less reluctant, when facilitators offered them the option of a speaking or non-speaking role during their assembly presentation. This relates back to the issue of taking a child-centred and child-directed approach through creating an inclusive and democratic environment (Mosley, 2009) where children are empowered to make their own choices, particularly in relation to the extent of their involvement, and do not feel marginalised or powerless.

Greater potential for learning therefore appeared to be associated with the active participation of children in drama activities (Jackson, 2002), firstly, by giving children the opportunity to enact scenes and take on the roles of the characters, thus allowing children meaningful ways of rehearsing skills and promoting empathy by putting themselves 'in the shoes' of the character, and secondly, through children being active in the process of reflection *during* the activity rather than following the drama (Bolton, 1993) through adult led questions. By affording children high status within the learning process, through whole

class improvisation where the 'teacher-in-role' takes on a low status, and where children are active partners in the process of learning, rather than passive recipients of information (Bruner, 1961, 1996 in McNaughton 2014), children appeared to be able to engage meaningfully in their learning experience.

Situating programme content in children's experience

A range of topics within the scope of relationships education was addressed in the Tender programme with the aim of preventing abuse in young people's relationships. Although the topics addressed in the programme broadly relate to those delivered to young people in secondary education, the material delivered in primary schools employs a specific focus on healthy friendships. Some aspects of the programme content are driven by funding priorities which set out specific outcome indicators, thereby influencing programme developers' decisions around what material is included. For example, the material delivered on day two of the programme differed according to either the requirement of the funder or the choice of the individual school, and the topics offered focus on either Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), Forced Marriage, 'Honour' Based Violence or Inappropriate Imagery. In the current study, the topic of Inappropriate Imagery was delivered to children in all three participating schools. These topics derive from the public health approach to sexual violence prevention (see Bellis et al., 2012) and inclusion of these topics in the programme is likely to be the result of how the programme is conceptualised within a public health discourse, and the promotion of healthy and unhealthy relationships. These topics are concerned with behaviour which occurs in interpersonal relationships, and although they may become more relevant as children get older these topics are often not applicable to children at this age. The requirement expressed by children in this study for material to be relevant and to connect with their own lived experiences rather than future lives (Qvortrup et al, 1994) suggests that unless programmes deliver content which is applicable and meaningful for them, programme content may be regarded as irrelevant. Although adults may feel that including topics which may affect children in their future lives will reduce the risk of abuse occurring, taking a child-centred approach which includes children in the design of programmes, is likely to ensure that programme topics are appropriate and therefore valued by children in their present lives. If the aim is to empower children through active participation (James et al, 1998), children within schools should be consulted about which topics are pertinent and therefore which subjects are covered.

Overall, children participating in this study appeared to be satisfied with the programme, with 80% of children who responded to the survey stating that they had enjoyed the programme. Children reported that they found various aspects of the programme stimulating and had enjoyed learning about new topics. However, children expressed concern around the lack of opportunity to explore some topics in depth, particularly around the consequences of seeking help. Although children appreciated material which recapped prior learning on where they can go for help, including previous school visits from ChildLine, material which simply reproduced information rather than providing the opportunity to learn something new was of little value. A lack of opportunity for children to explore the topic meant that some children were resistant to programme messages around seeking support and the extent to which help seeking is a confidential process. This may go some way in explaining why some children's understanding that they '*can get into trouble*' with adults (particularly parents) for sharing their concerns with other adults, did not shift (see section '*Help Seeking*' in Chapter Five).

Children's scepticism around the issue of confidentiality is consistent with findings from previous research where children expressed uncertainty around talking to teachers who they believed would share information in school staff rooms (Bell and Stanley, 2006) and parents who children perceived could not be trusted with personal information (Briggs, 1991). In their historic study of child sexual abuse protection programmes, Briggs and Hawkins (1996) reported that children, particularly those from low-income families, were more likely to report that adults 'stick together' and 'don't believe kids', that parents could not be relied upon to stop unwanted touching by other adults, that they blame and punish children if they talk about and/or report 'rude'²⁰ behaviour, and that children are punished for revealing adults' secrets. Briggs and Hawkins' study suggests that because of these beliefs, children keep 'rude' behaviour secret, and do not report it, as this is perceived to be 'rude' in itself.

Although knowledge about their rights, and the understanding that they are permitted to speak out and seek help, is a precursor to being able to apply their knowledge (Finkelhor, 2007; Tutty, 2014), the challenge for programmes is how children can be empowered to assert their rights and speak out against adults where necessary when programmes are delivered in the context of the school where children are likely to experience themselves as

²⁰ Rudeness is defined as talking about bodies, genitals, nudity and excretion and/or touching or exhibiting genitals or their underwear (Briggs and Hawkins, 1996).

powerless (Mayall, 2002). Offering clear, simple and honest guidance about what happens when they ask for help so that children feel legitimised to do so and less resistant to adult messages around the need to speak out without fear of punishment may be one way forward. Challenging adult authority (such as that of a parent) and revealing secrets in order to stay safe, are difficult concepts for children to learn (Wurtele, 2009) and are counter to societal norms about trusting adults and keeping secrets (Tutty, 2014). However, previous research findings on sexual abuse prevention programmes have clarified that children can learn these ideas (Davies and Gidycz, 2000; Finkelhor, 2007), that children grasp these complex concepts more easily when programmes use concrete examples (Briggs and Hawkins, 1994) and when children are taught clearly and concisely, which secrets must be told (Briggs, 1991). Although access to knowledge around help seeking is essential to keeping safe, children also need to be reassured of the consequences of seeking help and that adults can be relied upon to act appropriately and in accordance with their needs. Adopting a whole-school holistic approach (Maxwell and Aggleton, 2014) which incorporates adult training (discussed further below under '*Effective Implementation*'), including the education of both teachers and parents, so that children feel less uncertainty around talking to teachers (Bell and Stanley, 2006) and that parents know how to support them, may ensure that children feel confident about speaking out. As Briggs (1991) points out, if adults do not demonstrate their trustworthiness, and if families use parenting methods that discourage children's assertiveness, so that children believe they would '*get into trouble*' for doing so, children may be less likely to speak out about their concerns.

Learning around sexual abuse prevention and inappropriate imagery appeared to be acceptable to most children across all the schools, and the majority of children were engaged and stimulated by the content. This was observable during the delivery of the programme, and through comments during the focus group discussions where children reported feeling '*excited*' to be learning about these new topics (see Programme Content in Chapter Five). However, perhaps unsurprisingly, there was some degree of resistance and discomfort amongst a minority of children within each school. Although some discomfort was evident amongst a small number of boys (mainly in School C), this was more prevalent amongst girls, particularly those from the Catholic School (School B). Children who were critical of this content described feeling '*shocked*' or '*surprised*' to be engaging in these topics. It is significant that when asked if they had covered these topics before, none of the children mentioned previous learning around sexual abuse prevention or sexual imagery, highlighting the fact that these issues are not generally addressed with children this age, and

that children are not learning these messages elsewhere. This lack of familiarity may have been a factor for those children who described being taken by surprise by the material, and this relates to children feeling unprepared to be engaging in these subjects. Conceptualising children as active learners whose learning is a dynamic rather than passive process, indicates that readiness to engage in topics is an important part of the learning process (Howath et al., 2018; Stanley et al., 2015). Improving schools' readiness by ensuring that the aims of a programme are understood by staff, children and parents beforehand, may enable children to be better equipped and less anxious to be engaging in these subjects (discussed further below under '*Effective Implementation*').

Other children believed that material around sexual abuse prevention and sexual imagery was more suitable for older children. Although most children perceived these topics as beneficial and worthwhile, a small minority of boys and girls across all schools were less willing to accept that the material was appropriate for children their age. This meant that some children appeared embarrassed to be engaging in these subjects and were highly resistant to programme messages as a result. This was particularly evident amongst a small number of girls in the Catholic school, who detached themselves from the group as these subjects were being discussed, for example turning their chairs away from the group and moving to the cloakroom area. As noted above, this resistance also suggests a lack of readiness: such topics are likely to be more acceptable to children and perceived as relevant if they were better prepared. However, this may also be associated with other factors, including children's psychological development, cultural background or family beliefs (Briggs, 1991; Tutty, 2014; Robinson, 2017). For example, in relation to children's development, Tutty (2014) reported in her study of a sexual abuse prevention programme, that children in the 8 to 12 age group were more reserved and embarrassed than the younger 6 to 7 age group when recalling sexual concepts from the programme, as is appropriate for their age.

Despite some level of embarrassment however, few negative after-effects of sexual abuse prevention programmes, have been documented and it is suggested that if programmes created no discomfort at all, learning may be limited (Tutty, 2014). Similarly, Fox et al. (2014) suggest that some discomfort as part of children's learning is not always a bad thing, and that quality learning often takes place when skilled facilitators are able to help children work through their discomfort as a group. Utilising children's discomfort for the benefit of learning could therefore potentially enhance children's learning experience, although this would be dependent on the skills of those delivering learning. As Bolton (1993) points out, programme facilitators cannot cater for the individual background or feelings of any

particular child, and personal feelings are likely to remain unarticulated for each member of the class. Nonetheless, some children's discomfort can be exacerbated if they have witnessed or experienced abuse, and in this sense teachers, with their ongoing knowledge of and relationship with children in their class (Ellis et al., 2015; Thomas et al., 2016), would be well placed to identify and pick up any safeguarding concerns. However, children's minority status, particularly in the school context where they often exercise very little power, means that children are given little choice whether to participate in healthy relationships education and the subjects covered within it. The unequal power dynamic was apparent in the example cited above where a small number of girls who attempted to assert their right to withdraw by removing themselves were directed to re-join the group by adult teachers. Taking a child-centred approach would ensure that children are recognised as having a right to withdraw or dissent (Morrow and Richards, 1996), and that resistant children are not left feeling troubled, particularly if they have experienced abuse themselves.

Other children participating in this study reported being able to overcome their unease around these topics and embraced the opportunity to '*learn and expand*' (Boy, School B). Despite some level of discomfort, the response of the majority of children suggests that material was suitable for children this age. Learning within the group setting provides opportunities for children who are more receptive to material to facilitate those who are less so and encourage each other to begin to think of these topics as relevant to their age group, and this is discussed further below. However, as noted above, the challenge for programmes is to ensure that material relating to sexual issues, including sexual imagery, is relevant and meaningful to children this age. Although most children appeared to be somewhat familiar with the context of being pressured to send indecent photos, others were not. A small number of children who were unfamiliar with this scenario, reported feeling '*confused*' about the purpose of the material, suggesting that children may benefit from more information and transparency around the context of sending explicit images. Other children did not accept this situation as credible or relatable to children their age, and although material may become more relevant to those children as they get older, programmes need to ensure that content is applicable to children in their present lives. Most children however, were keen to hear about these issues, and in this context, the peer group dynamic appeared to be beneficial in order to offset variations in children's readiness to engage with topics within the group.

Family and cultural influences can also be associated with children's resistance to programme topics (Briggs, 1991). For example, as noted above, a small number of girls in

the Catholic school withdrew from material addressing sexual concepts, with one girl reasoning that *'I don't like talking about private parts'*, describing it as *'disgusting'* and commenting that she didn't want to listen, or have to tell her mother about what she had been learning (see observation notes under *'Programme Content'* in Chapter Five). Family influences have been identified as a factor in participants' resistance to programme messages in other research which recognised that messages at home could be more influential than programme messages (Reid Howie, 2001) and researchers have acknowledged the difficulty for participants to accept messages that counter family and cultural attitudes without the support of their family (Manship and Perry, 2012). This emphasises the importance of parental engagement (discussed further below under *'Effective Implementation'*) so that programme messages continue to be promoted at home, and that children are less likely to feel ashamed or guilty to be learning about these issues at school.

However, schools also have a vital part to play in children's ability to engage in these topics. Although various factors may have influenced some children's resistance, as discussed above, it is perhaps significant that girls from the Catholic faith school were perceptibly less willing to engage in learning around sexual concepts than any other group. Staff from this school reported the constraints faced by the school in relation to teachings that were not in accordance with their Catholic faith, including teaching about 'sex education' and 'relationships', as well as their concerns about the responses of parents (see also Reid Howie, 2001; Stanley et al., 2015). These topics, and the language used to describe concepts, may be particularly challenging for faith schools. In these schools, teachers' discouragement of or reluctance to engage in these subjects is likely to reverberate and these topics can come to be understood by children as off limits. If children internalise an understanding that these topics are prohibited, they are less likely to be able to engage with these subjects. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that although the perception is that parents, particularly those from faith communities, are less likely to accept these topics in schools, in this study none of the parents who teachers suspected might contact the school to complain did so, and a similar lack of parental concern was reported by Ellis (2006). This raises the question about whether the school agenda is driven by parents or vice versa. For example, in a study of parents' attitudes towards children's sexuality education, Robinson et al. (2017) (see Chapter Two) reported that the majority of parents in their study believed that sexuality education was relevant and important to primary school children and that a collaborative approach should be taken between families and schools.

Such concerns may not be fuelled only by religious prohibitions; they may also relate to adult discourses around protecting children's innocence (see '*Informing Parents*' in Chapter Six). Children's innocence is a key discourse used to restrict children's access to knowledge, particularly to that concerning sexual issues (Davies and Robinson, 2010; Renold, 2005; Robinson, 2012). These discourses of innocence are framed and reinforced through traditional developmentalist theories of childhood, such as those of Piaget (1973) (see '*Theorising children and childhood*' in Chapter Two). Within these developmentalist theories, children are considered to be too cognitively and emotionally immature to contend with abstract sexual concepts associated with maturity and adulthood, and these views may be reinforced by religious and cultural concerns among adults who believe that school-based programmes clash with family morals and values (Robinson, 2017). Consequently, conflicts can arise between parents and schools who embrace these family values, and those who advocate the need to equip children with the knowledge they need to make informed decisions to ensure they stay safe, both in their present and future lives. As noted above, by restricting access to comprehensive and accurate knowledge, it is likely that some children will understand these subjects as taboo, something that belongs in the adult domain, and therefore something that children should not talk about, especially with adults.

Peer group setting

In the UK context, the prevalence of interpersonal violence, particularly in young people's relationships (see Barter et al., 2009; NICE, 2014) and young people's attitudes towards violence and abuse (see Burman and Cartmel, 2005; Lombard, 2015) are frequently cited as a rationale for engaging in early relationships education and prevention work. Although such research highlights that some young people demonstrate undesirable attitudes towards violence in relationships, most young people have positive attitudes, and therefore the potential to use the peer group to safely influence peers and challenge less positive attitudes has been identified as a conceivable mechanism for social change (Stanley et al., 2015). This mechanism for social change relates to social norm theories of changes (Berkowitz and Perkins, 1986; Berkowitz 2004), whereby the majority of children expressing pro-social attitudes and behaviours can potentially influence and discourage peers with less desirable attitudes around these subjects. As noted above, most children in this study entered the programme with positive attitudes towards the issues addressed (see Chapter

Four), and through whole-group discussions within the peer group, children were provided with the opportunity to learn how to talk about the topics raised, thereby beginning to destigmatise the issues and contribute to shifts in social norms (WHO, 2009).

Some evidence of behaviour change was perceptible among children in School B who reported that through their collective learning and acquisition of the programme values of respectful relationships, better relationships developed among the group as a whole. This was supported by the class teacher, who reported '*a real shift*' in the behaviour and attitudes of children in the class one week following the programme. Working within a peer group setting provided children with opportunities for interaction and sharing of ideas: those children who enjoyed participative methods of learning described the benefits of learning from each other rather than through reading and written work. Some children described the value of being able to mix with peers outside their normal friendship group, and this led to the development of new friendships for some children. These types of benefits are supported by previous research (i.e. Ellis, 2006; Midford et al., 2017; Mullender et al., 2002; Reid Howie, 2001), and Bolton (1993) advocates the use of drama within the peer group setting as a mechanism for influencing personal and social development including problems relating to group interaction, discipline and self-esteem. As noted above, the peer group dynamic could also be usefully harnessed in order to offset variations within the groups, so that children who were able to engage with topics could potentially encourage others to begin to accept these topics as relevant to children their age (Tutty, 2014).

Although children in this study largely stated a preference for learning in mixed-sex groups, a small number of boys, all from School B, highlighted some disadvantages of learning together. They argued firstly, that single sex groups would allow them to talk more freely, since they considered that girls lacked discretion and therefore weren't trustworthy; and secondly, that it would enable easier discussion of gender-specific experiences, for example, talking about their experiences of romantic relationships. Although none of the girls advocated single sex groups, some were critical of boys' behaviour, which at times they viewed as '*silly*' and '*annoying*'. As noted earlier, the issue of trust was highlighted as a potential problem among the mixed-sex peer group in School B, with one boy perceiving that the lack of trust between boys and girls prevented a '*quarter of the class*' from speaking out and sharing their opinions. Encouraging children to share their feelings and opinions with their whole peer group is challenging, and requires facilitators to encourage openness, whilst also respecting privacy (CRG Research, 2009; Humphreys et al., 2006). Furthermore,

facilitators may struggle with knowing when and how to challenge children's undesirable opinions and attitudes, without discouraging them from contributing further (Fox et al., 2014). For example, in the current study, the opportunity for experiential learning was presented during a class discussion in School B on gender, whereby the gendered dynamic within the mixed-sex group, and tension between boys and girls contributed to children's diverse opinions around stereotypical gender roles. At times, facilitators were able to utilise this dynamic to challenge children's undesirable attitudes and to demonstrate programme messages (for example, highlighting disrespectful communication, see below), so making the learning directly relevant. However, although facilitators were able to create a discursive space where opinions could be challenged, gendered power dynamics were often reinforced, with boys shouting girls down and vice versa (see '*Methods of Delivery*' in Chapter Five). Consequently, although the mixed-sex group stimulated children's discussion around these issues, a small number of girls from School B, reported that at times, they felt dissatisfied and impeded by these discussions. As noted above, in order to be effective, this method peer group discussion needs to be implemented appropriately; as well as ensuring the transference of power and control to children, problems which can occur in relation to power dynamics amongst children require skilful facilitation (Hennessy and Heary, 2005).

Facilitator skills

Children's engagement in their learning experience was equally determined by the skills and attitudes of those delivering the programme, and this is supported by findings from other research (Bell and Stanley, 2006; CRG Research, 2009; Elias-Lambert et al., 2010; Fox et al., 2014). For example, as described above, the ability of facilitators to create a safe and trusting environment is essential, so that children feel comfortable engaging in complex and sensitive topics, whilst also allowing for privacy (CRG Research, 2009). Managing class dynamics, particularly within groups where existing tensions between children may prevent them from participating, also emerged as essential. For instance, skilled facilitators were able to utilise behaviour displayed by children which were counter to programme aims, in order to highlight programme messages and to manage class dynamics, i.e. '*I'd feel a little bit shut down if people shouted out at me like that*'.

Children's engagement was similarly determined by the ability of the facilitators to form positive connections and to be able to communicate effectively with them. For example,

children reported the value of adults who were inclusive and treated them with respect, being able to voice their opinion and be listened to. Children also appreciated adults who took the time to answer their questions adequately and who showed an interest in them. Development of trust between children and adults delivering programmes is understood to be a necessary prerequisite for meaningful engagement (Howarth et al., 2018). As noted in Chapter Five, there is a debate about who should deliver these programmes and what the role of the class teacher should be (CRG Research, 2009; Ellis, 2006; Fox et al., 2014; Hale et al., 2012; Stanley et al., 2015). For instance, findings from this study show that an appropriate level of teacher engagement can help to promote children's interest in the material, and teachers can help target discussions so that they connect with children's prior learning. Furthermore, teachers can assist programme facilitators to manage class dynamics and to support children if they are in discomfort, and their observer role creates opportunities for teachers to pick up on safeguarding concerns. However, in order to support programmes effectively, teachers' input needs to be limited so that ownership is retained by the children, and teachers should not intervene in a manner that undermines children and values around respectful behaviour (see '*Teacher Roles*', in Chapter Six). Similar findings were described by Fox et al. (2014), where it was reported that a teacher had intervened in a manner that had shut down student participation. Managing children's discussion thus requires those delivering programmes to understand their role and to be skilled in working with group dynamics. Thinking about children as active learners also requires facilitators to be prepared to allow children more control and ownership of the learning process. Providing opportunities for children to explore concepts among the peer group and facilitating children through this process may help children to achieve this.

Programme length

Children largely reported that they would prefer more time learning about these topics, reasoning that learning over two consecutive days was too intensive. Children reported that the information was too dense, and they weren't able to learn or remember as much as they would have liked. Opportunities to ask questions or to explore topics in more detail was insufficient, and the concentration of the programme over two days may have contributed to children's sense that there was little opportunity to explore tricky questions such as what might happen if they speak out and ask for help, in depth. Children also reported feeling frustrated by the lack of time available to prepare for the presentation of their new

knowledge at the end of the programme. Other studies have reported similar levels of dissatisfaction with programmes which are too dense due to lack of time (e.g. DMSS, 2012; Reid Howie, 2001). Findings from this study suggest that in order to help children to properly engage and reflect on their learning, along with the need for children to hear messages repeatedly (Tutty, 2000), more time needs to be spent learning about these issues. Taking a whole-school approach and preparing schools to return to the topics, once programmes end, may suggest a way forward.

Conditions for effective implementation: schools' readiness

Readiness of schools for programme implementation

The readiness of schools to engage in the programme emerged as an important factor contributing to the acceptability of the programme for children and teachers and to children's engagement in their learning. The concept of 'readiness' in relation to interventions refers to an individual person's or organisation's willingness to change and/or engage in an intervention (Howarth et al., 2018). A school's readiness has been identified as an important aspect for the implementation of preventive interventions and relates to the need for prevention work to be supported across all aspects of school life (Stanley et al., 2015). This 'whole-school approach' to prevention work is based on the widely adopted ecological model of violence prevention (WHO, 2010) whereby learning is reinforced across the curriculum and other aspects of school culture and involves the engagement of all members of the school community. The whole-school approach thus represents a mechanism for social change which aims to alter cultural and social norms supportive of interpersonal violence (see e.g. DMSS, 2012; Mahony and Shaugnessy, 2007; Maxwell et al., 2010).

In this study, a lack of readiness was evident across all schools. For example, class teachers were not consulted by senior staff when decisions were made to implement the programme and teachers were not fully aware of the programme aims, content or process of delivery. Senior staff in one school initially believed the topics to be '*unsuitable*' for children, and staff in the Catholic school expressed significant concern about content relating to sexual abuse (see discussion in Chapter Six). Within the wider school context, school life proceeded as normal with teachers engaging in marking, or occasionally leaving the classroom whilst the

programme was delivered, and external interruptions to the programme occurred across all the schools, for example, children being summoned for extra support lessons. Although primary schools typically operate in this way, these occurrences reflect the lack of readiness and the broader commitment of schools towards the implementation of the programme.

The 'whole-school' approach clearly requires extensive planning and this may not be feasible for all schools. However, part of the task of programme implementation is to achieve some degree of school readiness for prevention work. It is expected that schools will become more interested in healthy relationships education in view of recent policy changes, and the requirement of primary schools to teach relationships education to all children. Government's recent guidance (DfE, 2018) is likely to contribute to schools' readiness on this topic, although the successful implementation of this work cannot rely on motivation coming from the outside alone. Although policy change is closely linked with the implementation of prevention initiatives in schools, previous research has emphasised that without the commitment and understanding of school staff to the aims, *'no amount of policy and programmes are going to work.'* (Stanley et al., 2015: 129). Relationships education is an innovative topic for primary schools and it is unlikely that such innovations can be successfully embedded if the attitudes of school staff are unfavourable. A social ecological approach to prevention (Foshee et al., 2012; WHO, 2010), where the influences of the social environment within the boundaries of a school system are taken into account and better prepared for are likely to enhance effective prevention work. Ensuring that senior staff and teachers are properly aware of the programme aims and content beforehand is likely to increase the commitment of school staff to the programme and its objectives, so that messages are consistently heard and not undermined, both during its delivery and once the programme ends (DMSS, 2012; Maxwell, 2010).

This also relates to children's readiness to engage with programme topics and schools' readiness to facilitate that process; individual children may not be ready to engage, however if the school and individual teachers demonstrate their commitment, this could resonate with children so they too are better prepared. As discussed above, this may be particularly relevant for those children who attend schools where topics may be especially challenging for teachers to engage with. Helping children to engage in topics which cause them discomfort could be achieved by familiarising children with subjects beforehand, so that children are less likely to feel less anxious or embarrassed to talk about them within their peer group. Providing children with constructive information about the programme content and process beforehand is likely to help children prepare to engage in the material in

advance and may increase the acceptability of topics for those who children who demonstrate resistance to programme messages and so enhance their willingness to participate (Humphreys et al., 2006). Using the terminology of 'Healthy Relationships' to label programmes obscures the aims and content of programmes and therefore contributes to a lack of readiness for both children and staff. Increasing children's readiness by preparing them to engage in programme topics in advance, ensuring the aims are clear to them, and improving schools' readiness by helping them to facilitate children's engagement could be a way of ensuring that children are less anxious or surprised to be engaging in these topics. As noted above, adopting a child-centred approach which acknowledges children's right to withdraw from programmes would ensure that children who do not want to participate are not constrained to do so.

Working in partnership with teachers

As discussed in Chapter Five, there is considerable discussion within the literature around who should be delivering prevention programmes in schools (Bell and Stanley, 2006; Fox et al., 2014; Hester and Westmarland, 2005; Reid Howie, 2001). Staff from external agencies possess the relevant knowledge and expertise and are more likely to use innovative teaching methods, making learning more authentic and engaging for children. Yet their potential to reach all children is restricted, and the limited time they are able to commit to schools means that they are less likely to impact on school culture or provide continuity for learning. On the other hand, teachers possess expertise in working with children and have established and ongoing relationships with them (Fox et al., 2014; Thomas et al., 2016). This means that teachers are better placed to recognise children's responses to their learning and to follow up any safeguarding concerns. However, some teachers describe feeling a lack of confidence and competence to teach these topics particularly in relation to dealing with subsequent disclosures (Ellis et al., 2015). Children in the current study largely reported a preference for material to be delivered by external staff, ascribing facilitators with the relevant experience and knowledge, and making learning '*more fun*'. However, some children stated a preference for their teacher to deliver, emphasising the value they placed on discussing complex and sensitive topics with an adult they already know and trust.

Working in partnership could ensure the strengths of each approach, and this practice has been adopted by other programmes for primary schools (see e.g. Datta et al., 2005;

McElearney et al., 2011). Government's most recent consultation on this issue (DfE, 2018) sets out the requirement for external staff to be used to enhance teaching by school staff, rather than as a replacement for teaching by those staff (see also Blake et al., 2014). However, previous research has found that teachers often lack the skills and confidence to deliver these topics (e.g. Reid Howie, 2001) and teacher training on RSE and Relationships Education is currently insufficient at the qualifying level. At present, much of the expertise and skills required to deliver these subjects comes from third sector external organisations, and teachers can potentially develop their skills and confidence to deliver this work by engaging closely with specialist staff during programme delivery (Stanley et al., 2015). In the current study, teachers were able to learn how to manage topics through their observation of the programme delivery, and one teacher spoke of feeling better equipped to revisit topics once the programme ended. As teachers are picking up disclosures both during and after the programme, this emphasises the need for teachers to be closely involved. Although teachers benefited from their observer role, further training would be essential so that teachers are more fully prepared and could pick up effectively once programmes end. This would enable class teachers and the wider staff team to learn about programmes aims and contents, as well as the pedagogical approaches applied, so that learning could be better supported across the school. Training could also help teachers to identify where the opportunities lie in raising issues across the curriculum so that learning is reinforced after programme delivery, thus ensuring messages are repeated on a continuous basis.

Developing a partnership with teachers both before and during programme delivery would help to prepare schools and increase their readiness for programme implementation. Previous research shows that teachers who had received training prior to interventions from staff in partner organisations, or from colleagues who had undertaken training (e.g. Thiara and Ellis, 2005; DMSS; 2012) found that training was crucial to their being able to deliver or support a programme. However, ongoing support was also essential for teachers who lacked confidence in teaching this type of work and dealing with the issues raised (Ellis et al., 2015). The provision of additional training and support may be particularly relevant for schools where concepts are not already valued or recognised. Where the fear of parental responses to programme content is an issue, it may be easier for schools to work in partnership with external third sector organisations (Foshee et al., 2011) and it may be easier for faith schools to work in partnership with external organisations to manage and overcome religious constraints (see Reid Howie, 2001).

Engaging with parents

The significant influence of parents in the development of their children's understanding about relationships is acknowledged in government's recent guidance on Relationships Education and RSE (DfE, 2018). For this reason, schools have an important role in supporting parents to engage with topics by ensuring transparency around the aims and contents of programmes of work before implementation. This could involve the development of written and/or online forms of information, outlining why it is important to address relationships education with children, what topics programmes cover and how topics are delivered. Information could also highlight opportunities for parents to promote programme aims at home and provide support with regards to best practice around talking to their children about the issues raised (Robinson et al., 2017). Inviting parents to information sessions or small group workshops to discuss the work would provide the opportunity to address any concerns they may have and increase parents' confidence in the work.

Although it is recognised that engaging parents in education is challenging, government's recent guidance (DfE, 2018) stresses the needs for schools to ensure that parents are provided with examples of resources in order to reassure parents, and to enable them to continue conversations started in the classroom at home. Parents and families are well placed to recognise when their children may need support and therefore must know how they can support them. Essentially, parents should be made aware of the influence that families exert on their children's attitudes towards these topics. Although a limitation of the current study is that few parents engaged in the research, findings from the observation data and children's focus group discussions indicate that parents and families are an unseen influence on children's attitudes and knowledge (e.g. children not wanting to engage in learning due to perceived parental criticism). Foshee et al. (2011) suggest that the family is the primary context where information and values are learnt and that families have a significant impact on abuse risk factors. Previous research on sexual abuse prevention programmes (e.g. Briggs and Hawkins, 1996) indicate that children from families whose parenting methods run counter to safety concepts taught in protection programmes, such as encouraging secrecy and discouraging assertiveness, remain more vulnerable to abuse than children from families that reinforce safety concepts at home, such as problem solving and encouraging openness in child-parent relationships. Furthermore, the literature on sexual abuse prevention programmes confirms that children taught by both teachers and parents in a cooperative effort show greater improvements in personal safety skills compared with

children only taught by teachers (e.g. Burgess and Wurtele, 1998; Wurtele et al., 1992). In their evaluation of 'Families for Safe Dates', Foshee et al. (2011) reported that teenagers' acceptance of violence in dating relationships decreased following positive changes in the family context. This was the first evaluated programme to include the education of parents in an effort to prevent interpersonal violence in their children's relationships. Such studies suggest that efforts should be made to involve parents in prevention programmes offered by schools.

Parental involvement has been conceptualised as an additional feature of the whole-school approach to prevention efforts (see Stanley et al., 2015). However, as suggested above, parental involvement can be hard to achieve and not all parents will be cooperative; some parents will have experienced abuse themselves; others may not be aware of their own role in influencing their children's understandings of interpersonal relationships and will be happy to leave the responsibility to schools; whilst other parents will view the education of their children on these issues to be their responsibility alone (Briggs, 1991; Robinson et al., 2017). Children themselves may not want their parents to be involved in this area of their learning (Stanley et al., 2015). However, without parent education, attempts to empower children may be ineffective particularly for those children who believe they would be at risk of criticism from parents where programme messages counter family and cultural attitudes, or for children who believe they would be at risk of punishment for engaging in behaviour which violates parenting norms, such as children asserting their rights to speak out and breaking family secrets.

The impact of the public health model of prevention

Although feminist understandings of the gendered nature of violence underpinned the programme studied, and the concept of power and gender inequality was addressed, the programme was framed by a public health discourse, promoting the idea of healthy and unhealthy relationships. This was contextualised through an understanding that by re-establishing the subject as 'healthy/unhealthy relationships', as opposed to 'domestic violence' or 'gender-based violence' prevention, children and young people were able to view the subject as immediately relevant to their own circumstances, rather than perceiving it as abuse between adults. An alternative explanation may be that, as teachers are often described as expressing anxiety about this subject (see Stanley et al., 2015), particularly if

the focus is on gender and the issue is perceived as political (Ellis, 2006; Hester and Westmarland, 2005; Mahony and Shaugnessy, 2007) or potentially alienating for boys (Fox et al., 2014), re-framing the subject as healthy relationships, was likely to lessen these anxieties. This is also perceptible in the shift in terminology from 'Sex and Relationships Education' to 'Relationships Education' in Government's most recent consultation on this topic (DfE, 2018). Although the programme is working within two different paradigms, taking a public health approach may be less controversial. While an ecological public health model is widely adopted in prevention work, it is argued that this approach dilutes an understanding of domestic violence as a gendered issue which is explained through structural inequalities, societal norms and inequalities within communities and relationships, as discussed in Chapter Two. By adopting the broader public health framework of 'healthy relationships', gender becomes obscured in school-based programmes. The tension between these two paradigms is evident in responses to programmes, with teachers and children describing feeling surprised to be engaging in content relating to abuse and sexual violence when the language used to describe the programme aims (e.g. to promote healthy relationships) was situated within a public health model. As discussed in Chapters Five and Six, the uncertainty of what was meant by 'healthy relationships' led to a lack of readiness among both children and teachers. Adopting more explicit language to promote programmes, such as domestic violence or gender-based violence prevention, may provide a means of ensuring that children in particular are more prepared for programme topics, as discussed above, rather than having to work out the aim of the programme for themselves.

It could be argued that controversies around adopting an explicitly gendered approach are adult anxieties; as this study shows, children respond positively when they are given the opportunity to engage in work that is relevant to them, and worthwhile. Children are left confused and sceptical however, when the nature and purpose of the work is not made clear to them (see '*Programme Content*' in Chapter Five). As Pammenter (2002) points out, the socio-political factors that govern the lives of adults are the same as those for children, and if access to knowledge is an important aspect in the lives of children as citizens (see e.g. UNCRC, 1989), then all aspects of knowledge should be accessible to them so they can understand, explore and challenge them, if they choose. As discussed above, the way that the concepts of childhood and innocence have been utilised to regulate children's access to knowledge, is as Robinson (2012) proposes, to deny the rights of children as social actors whose sexuality, as encompassed by intimacy, relationships and emotions, is central to their sense of identity (Burman, 2016; Renold, 2005; Robinson 2012; Tsaliki, 2015).

Contribution of key findings to theoretical knowledge

This study has produced findings which can inform the development of both policy and practice in school-based violence prevention for children under 11. It has also generated theoretical findings, and these are discussed below in relation to the relevant literature.

Sociology of childhood theories challenge the idea of the child as a blank canvas upon which knowledge is inscribed and passively received (James et al., 1998). If the child is understood to be dynamic and participatory in their own construction of knowledge (Morrow and Richards, 1996), there is a need for programmes to approach children as active learners, rather than empty vessels to be filled, and employ approaches which offer real opportunities for engaged and active learning. The need for children to be treated as active learners requires recognition that children are able to contend with difficult questions and can do so if they are provided with opportunities to explore issues in depth, alongside adequate time for reflection. The peer group setting provides opportunities for interactive learning, enabling children to learn from each other, whilst skilful facilitation can ensure a transfer of power and control to children (Hennessy and Heary, 2005). Sociology of childhood theory which calls for the conceptualisation of children as social actors and as people in their own right rather than as 'becomings' (Qvortrup et al., 1994) provides a framework for thinking about the importance of engaging with children in their current lives, rather than in their future lives as adults (Jenks, 1996). Locating programme contents in children's lived experience enables children to connect with material so that learning is applicable and meaningful to them in the here and now. For example, if programmes situate discussions of gender around adult concepts of future job roles and intimate relationships, learning is less likely to be relevant for children. Basing teaching around what gender means for children in their daily lives and making gender visible in their everyday attitudes and behaviour (Nayler and Keddie, 2007) is more likely to resonate with and engage children meaningfully in their learning. If programmes are underpinned by concepts of children as social actors, as 'being' not just 'becoming', along with children's rights discourses which promote the development of 'participatory' approaches (Øverlien and Holt, 2018), then programmes should be developed in collaboration with children in order to enhance their relevance and appeal. However, an emphasis on children as actors in their own right (Mayall, 2002), contrasts with the current public health approach with its future orientation and focus on prospective benefits for children which currently informs much of the thinking on prevention

programmes. If the aim is to empower children through active participation (James et al., 1998), then children would need to be fully consulted in the development and delivery of programmes so that content and teaching methods are relevant for children in their present lives.

Developing this idea further, understandings of children as social actors with agency conflict with both traditional concepts of children as passive recipients of knowledge (James and Prout, 2003) and with notions of children as 'innocent' in need of adult protection (Jenks, 1996). Yet, discourses of children's innocence continue to dominate (Meyer, 2007) as do child-adult power relations in which children's minority status renders them as relatively powerless (Mayall, 2002). These power relations are particularly embedded and evident in school settings (Punch, 2002). Discourses of children's innocence, especially in relation to information around sexual issues (Robinson and Davies, 2017) remain prevalent, with school staff describing programme topics as 'unsuitable' for children and expressing concern around content relating to sexual abuse.

However, if understandings of children as social actors with agency are applied to the development of programmes whose aim is to empower children, then the concept of readiness begins to emerge (Howarth et al., 2018). To be achieved, readiness would need to be applied at different levels across the school. Taking a child centred approach to the concept of children's readiness would ensure that children are consulted during the development of programmes, so that material and methods of delivery are applicable and meaningful for them. The readiness of programme developers to engage with children as their target audience is a key aspect of ensuring that readiness. An approach which is child centred in this respect would involve developing programmes which reflect the differing needs and interests of children within their communities (Featherstone et al., 2013). This would require programme developers to get to know children, to understand what stage children are at and would need deeper preparatory work and thinking around children's requirements rather than assuming what children need. Moving away from the current public health approach to violence prevention and being prepared to describe programmes in a way which does not obscure their aims will also help prepare children and schools to engage in topics. Adopting feminist discourses which clearly explain the gendered nature of relationship abuse (Flood et al., 2009) could inform this approach so that children understand the problem and why it exists. Thinking about children as dynamic and participatory in their own construction of knowledge necessitates those delivering programmes to be ready to employ approaches which offer children real opportunities for

participatory and in-depth learning. This approach would require schools to move away from traditional constructions of children as passive recipients of knowledge towards a view of children as active and participative in their learning. Schools would need to challenge the notion of children as ‘innocent’ and be ready to accept that relationships and sex education does not impact negatively on children (Fox et al., 2014; Fryda and Hulme, 2015; Tutty, 2014; Walsh et al., 2015). Schools’ readiness to accept the need for children to learn about these concepts is likely to resonate with children so that children themselves feel legitimised and better prepared to engage with topics. The readiness of school staff may be better achieved if programmes work collaboratively with teachers (Thiara and Ellis, 2005; DMSS; 2012), particularly within those schools where concepts are not already valued (Reid Howie, 2001), or where the fear of parental responses may be an issue (Foshee et al., 2011).

A whole-school approach, which involves the engagement of all members of the school community (Maxwell et al., 2010), would be both a consequence and a means of developing readiness. Readiness for relationships education would not be located within one or two individuals, or in a single area of the curriculum, such as PSHE, but would be part of the wider school culture and whole school policy. In contrast to one-off, stand-alone programmes, such as that studied here, such an approach is embedded within schools rather than supplementary. Adopting a whole-school approach to prevention where the influences of the school environment are taken account and better prepared for is likely to enhance effective prevention work (Foshee et al., 2012). Attention would be paid to the context in which lessons are delivered so that learning is prioritised, and disruptions limited, contrasting to the ways schools typically operate where interruptions to children’s lessons commonly occur (see Chapter Six). Opportunities to raise issues and make connections to the work would reinforce learning across the formal curriculum and informal school spaces. Gendered norms and expectations within school environments which influence attitudes around how boys and girls behave (Renold, 2005), and opportunities to utilise spaces and resources (Maxwell et al., 2010) would be reformed. By responding to incidents within classrooms or topics raised, teachers can contextualise the issues so that learning is more likely to resonate with children (Nayler and Keddie, 2007): children could be encouraged and supported to recognise and confront behaviour which supports gender inequality and bullying in school. Adopting a holistic whole-school approach, to include adult training, including the education of both teachers and parents, could ensure that adults are better prepared to recognise when a child requires help, and this may help to reassure children that if they speak out they will be taken seriously and receive the support they need.

As other studies have identified, if teachers are not appropriately prepared or insufficiently involved, programme messages may be undermined (Meiksin et al., 2020). Although schools can offer a counter to traditional notions of children's status and knowledge, some families may not be prepared to do so. The important influence that families have on children's ability to accept and internalise prevention concepts suggests that schools may need to be prepared to engage and educate parents (Robinson et al., 2017) without whose support, attempts to empower children through programmes of learning in school may be ineffective. At a broader level, wider public and political readiness to incorporate these concepts within the primary school curriculum through the introduction of relationships education is likely to increase schools' readiness for these topics. However, this remains an innovative area of learning for primary schools and it is unlikely that such innovations can be embedded successfully unless readiness is achieved at the various levels described here.

Discussion Chapter Summary

- The quantitative data generated by the survey showed that most children held positive attitudes in relation to gender equality, conflict management, recognising and responding to bullying and seeking help and less positive attitudes towards other concepts including: recognising good and bad touch; challenging adult authority; keeping secrets; and knowing when to break friends' promises. Differences in children's existing attitudes towards these topics may indicate whether children are able to relate to such concepts and will reflect the extent to which topics are talked about with children or not.
- Children are more likely to engage in material that is relevant, authentic and connected with their own lives so that messages are not disregarded or misunderstood. Involving children in the design of prevention programmes is more likely to ensure that content is more relevant to children and their experiences.
- Delivering complex messages aimed at empowering children within the school context where children exercise little power is a challenge for prevention programmes. Adopting a holistic whole-school approach so staff are better prepared to pick up programme concepts may help schools to support children's empowerment once a programme ends.
- Participative approaches including drama-based games and interactive exercises emerge as an essential component in children's enjoyment and engagement. Educational drama has the capacity to empower children through their acquisition of embodied knowledge and skills to recognise potentially harmful situations and by engaging them in material that has relevance and meaning to their own lives. Authenticity can enhance engagement and this can be achieved through the delivery of programme messages by external providers with relevant experience and expertise.
- Taking a child-centred approach which encompasses the empowerment of children through active participation and choice and providing them with opportunities to explore and actively reflect on topics is more likely to enhance children's motivation and learning experience.

- Learning within the peer group appeared to be beneficial in counteracting variations in children's readiness to engage with topics and has the potential to contribute to shifts in social norms where the majority of children expressing positive attitudes are able to influence peers with less desirable attitudes around these subjects.
- Children are more likely to engage in discussion when programmes take a child-centred approach in which the hierarchy of relations between them and the teacher/facilitator is flattened, and when trust and respect has been generated among the group. Taking such an approach, which recognises children's right to withdraw would ensure that children who do not want to engage are not left feeling anxious.
- Although programme topics were generally acceptable to the majority of children, a minority of boys and girls across all schools expressed some discomfort around the topic of sexual abuse prevention which could be explained by a lack of readiness to engage, cultural background or family beliefs.
- Improving schools' readiness by ensuring that the aims of the programme are recognised and understood may help staff to accept the material as relevant for children and ensure concepts are integrated once a programme ends.
- Preparing children in advance by including them in this process may facilitate children's readiness and engagement in topics beforehand. Improving parents' readiness by ensuring they are aware of the programmes aims may help families to reinforce messages at home and increase programmes' impact.
- Adopting a whole-school approach, which involves the engagement of all members of the school community is likely to enhance schools' readiness and be a means of developing effective prevention work.

CHAPTER EIGHT: CONCLUSION

Introduction

This study provides evidence of the impact and experiences of one violence prevention programme targeted at primary school children, aged 10 and 11 in England. In doing so, this research contributes to the underdeveloped body of knowledge regarding integrated violence prevention programmes for younger children. The recent shift in government policy towards the introduction of statutory relationships education in primary schools in England and Wales is likely to increase demand for these types of programmes, yet very little knowledge exists about the effectiveness of programmes for younger children which tackle the range of issues contained within relationships education. This research contributes to the construction of a much needed evidence base that both schools and those developing and delivering prevention programmes can draw on by providing answers to the three principle research questions:

1. Can preventive school-based programmes improve younger children's knowledge and skills to enable them to recognise different forms of violence, including domestic violence towards themselves and others?
2. How can impact be achieved for younger children and what forms of delivery influence outcomes?
3. How can the views of children and adults inform the development of relationships education in primary schools?

Key findings in respect of these research questions are reviewed in this concluding chapter, followed by consideration of the implications for current policy and practice, and future research.

Summary of key research findings

Can prevention programmes improve younger children's knowledge and skills to recognise different forms of violence?

Findings from this study demonstrate that younger children can learn about important prevention concepts, for example knowing when to break friends' promises and recognising differences between good and bad touch, and most children value the opportunity to learn about these issues. This is an important finding and one that should be considered closely in debates about the suitability of topics for this age group (Davies and Robinson; 2010; Robinson, 2012). Children's widespread support for the topics covered indicates that the subject-matter is both relevant and meaningful for them, and that children value the opportunity to openly explore the issues, whether they are experiencing them in their present lives or not.

As children are not a homogenous group (Punch, 2002), they bring varied experiences, knowledge and attitudes to their learning. Yet most children participating in this research already appeared to have positive attitudes towards a number of key concepts addressed in the programme, and it is likely that children's attitudes towards these topics were reinforced by the programme. There is nevertheless a need for children to be learning about these issues in school, and for learning to be repeated and reinforced over time (Tutty, 2014) as a significant number of children expressed less 'desirable' attitudes towards some safeguarding concepts before the programme.

Although this is an innovative area of learning within primary schools, children in this study appeared to find this new material appealing. However, children expressed frustration around the lack of opportunity to explore the topics in depth, particularly in relation to the topic of help seeking; this research indicated that such messages are susceptible to resistance if children do not feel confident about the outcome of seeking help. Furthermore, although children were not used to learning around sexual abuse and sexual pressure, the majority of children participating in this research appeared to engage with these topics positively. This lends support to the debate about the suitability of engaging children this age in these topics (Robinson et al., 2017). However, some children who were critical of these topics described their discomfort in relation to their child status perceiving these as adult concepts, and a minority of children (all girls) were highly resistant to talk around sexual issues. This is perhaps unsurprising when considering adult discourses around

protecting children's innocence (Davies and Robinson, 2010), particularly within schools where such topics are off limits. Embracing the concept of readiness (Howarth et al., 2018) may help those children who appear resistant to engaging in these topics and this includes ensuring teachers' and parents' readiness, through appropriate education and training, so that children feel permitted and better equipped to be discussing these subjects. Moreover, learning within the peer group where the majority of children welcome the opportunity to talk about these issues can potentially help those who are more resistant to engage.

How can impact be achieved for younger children?

The extent to which children engage and learn from programmes depends largely on the ways in which topics are delivered. For example, Tender's model of using drama-based games and activities clearly emerged as an essential component in children's enjoyment and engagement with these topics (see also DMSS, 2012). As dynamic and active learners (James et al., 1998), children value these participative approaches comparing them favourably with more traditional styles of learning in schools where children are usually situated as passive recipients of knowledge. Educational drama has the capacity to empower children through their acquisition of embodied knowledge, skills and confidence to manage potentially harmful situations by engaging them in material that has relevance and meaning to their own lives (Jackson, 1993; McElwee and Fox, 2020). Improved relationships among children within one classroom could be attributed to the interactive methods of programme delivery providing children with the opportunity to work together, share ideas and learn from each other (Bolton, 1993): the programme gave them the opportunity to learn by doing and through reflection on activities, sharing ideas, thus feeling better connected to their peers. Children acquired the language and skills to talk about abuse and were encouraged to move away from using non-specific language, such as 'rude' and 'teasing' to describe abusive behaviour towards more specific language such as 'controlling', 'threatening' and 'bullying'. By naming and labelling behaviour, children are encouraged to recognise normative behaviour as unacceptable (Kelly, 1988). Learning how to talk about these various forms of abusive behaviour within the peer group setting can help to destigmatise issues thereby contributing to shifts in social norms (Berkowitz, 2005; WHO, 2010).

Authenticity is enhanced when messages are delivered by those with relevant experience (Stanley et al., 2017; McElwee and Fox, 2020) and when material is delivered in a way that has meaning for children, rather than through the simple transfer of knowledge (Morrow

and Richards, 1996). The proficiency of those facilitating programmes emerged as an important component for children to engage in their learning. For example, skilful facilitation requires adults to create a respectful and trusting environment (CRG Research, 2009), to manage power dynamics among the group (Hennessy and Heary, 2005) and to establish clear boundaries so that children feel comfortable engaging in complex and sensitive topics (Manship and Perry, 2012). Facilitators need to be competent at challenging children's 'undesirable' opinions and attitudes without discouraging them to participate (Fox et al., 2014), and, where relevant, to be able to utilise power imbalances amongst the group so that learning around power and control in relationships is experiential and immediately relevant (Ellis, 2004). Skilled facilitators who are able to utilise children's discomfort around 'sensitive' topics can potentially enhance children's learning experience and promote retention of programme messages (Fox et al., 2014; Tutty, 2014). Children emphasised the value of education on personal relationships being delivered by adults who are inclusive and treat them with respect and who minimise power disparities in the child/adult relationship (Mayall, 2002). As social actors with agency (James et al., 1998), children value the opportunity to voice their opinion, be listened to and have their questions answered adequately and openly.

Given the recent move towards statutory relationships education and the requirement for school staff to teach these subjects, the extent to which teachers in England and Wales currently possess the wide range of skills required to teach these topics effectively is brought into question. This is particularly relevant in relation to minimising power disparities in child-adult relations within the school context where children wield minimal power (Einarsdottir, 2007; Thomas et al., 2016). However, teachers can potentially develop their skills and confidence to deliver this work by engaging closely with specialist staff during programme delivery (Stanley et al., 2011). Although children in this study largely reported a preference for the programme to be delivered by external staff, since they considered programme facilitators to possess relevant knowledge and experience and made learning '*more fun*', a joint approach between teachers and external facilitators could serve to take advantage of the strengths of each approach. Integrating the work into the school curriculum is likely to convey a strong message that these topics are an important aspect of children's learning, and teachers, with their ongoing relationship with children (Fox et al., 2014; Ellis et al., 2015), are ideally placed to identify safeguarding concerns. Teachers themselves indicated a preference for topics to be delivered by specialist external staff, owing to a lack of time, skills and confidence to deliver the work themselves. Regardless of

who delivers, it is clear that high quality training is essential to deliver these subjects effectively (Ellis, 2004; Fox et al., 2014; Reid Howie Associates, 2002) and, in the short term, schools may need support from third sector organisations where much of the expertise and skills required to deliver these subjects is currently located (Ellis et al., 2015).

'Readiness' for effective implementation of programmes: engaging with children, parents and teachers

The programme for primary schools studied here provides an example of a well-established, wide-reaching programme which covers a breadth of topics within the scope of healthy relationships education. Tender have been highly successful at recruiting schools and obtaining the funding necessary to sustain their programme; a significant appeal for schools is that the programme is offered free of charge. This has meant that resources have been focused on programme delivery. However, ensuring schools' readiness for prevention work is part of the task of programme implementation (Howarth et al., 2018) and building schools' readiness beforehand is likely to increase the commitment of staff to programme aims and objectives. A holistic 'whole-school' approach, which involves the engagement of all members of the school community (Maxwell et al., 2010) provides a valuable framework when considering ways in which readiness can be developed. At present, content is largely determined by those funding programmes. However, readiness for programme implementation also requires developers to provide means of engaging children in the process of programme development to ensure that content and the method of delivery is applicable for children. Moving away from current public health approaches to prevention which focus on future benefits and focussing instead on the needs of children in their current lives (Jenks, 1996) is an important part of this process. Ensuring children are fully aware of programme aims and content is likely to increase children's readiness to engage in programme material and increase its acceptability for children who are resistant to programme messages. Government's recent decision to include relationships education within the primary school curriculum is likely to contribute to schools' readiness on this topic. However, successful implementation will require commitment and understanding among school staff and parents in respect of the programmes' aims. Much of the expertise and skills required to deliver these subjects comes from third sector external organisations and teachers can potentially develop their skills and confidence to continue this work in the future by engaging closely with specialist staff during programme delivery. External

organisations are well placed to support schools to engage with parents and to provide education and training so that teachers and parents understand the need to engage children and schools in these innovative topics; without parent education, attempts to empower children may be ineffective, particularly for those children who come from families whose values run counter to those the programme aims to convey (Robinson et al., 2017).

Implications for policy and practice

This research opens up a number of further questions which have implications for Government policy and for practice in relation to both schools and those developing and delivering programmes in light of the introduction of relationships education to the primary school curriculum in England and Wales. These questions include:

- How can readiness be achieved in schools?
- How can readiness be achieved for parents?
- How can programme developers work together with schools?
- How can children be involved in programme development and delivery?
- How can programme developers strengthen their theory of change so that programmes are delivered effectively for younger children?

Government policy level: readiness

Schools' readiness has been identified as an important aspect for implementation of preventive interventions and this relates to the need for prevention work to be supported across all aspects of school life (Maxwell et al., 2010) including preparation of schools, children and parents. As noted above, relationships education is likely to contribute to schools' readiness to implement this area of learning with statutory implementation due to take effect from September 2020 (DfE, 2018; DfE, 2019). Extending the implementation date from 2019 to 2020 was intended to give those schools needing additional support, time to plan for quality provision. The current lack of skills and training for school staff means that in the short term, primary schools will need to draw on the skills and experience of third sector external organisations to strengthen delivery of these subjects. Updated guidance for implementation of relationships education for primary schools published in June 2019 acknowledges the specialist knowledge and innovative teaching methods currently located

within external organisations. However, there is a lack of emphasis in the guidance on the ways that schools and external organisations can work together. Government guidance needs to stress the importance of schools working in partnership and encourage them to utilise the skills and experience of external organisations who currently deliver this work. However, this may also require additional funding to enable schools to buy into such programmes: such funding is not currently being offered by Government.

The updated guidance on working with parents (DfE, 2019) emphasises the important role of parents in the development of children's understanding of relationships and the significant influence that parents have on how children perceive relationships. Schools are expected to work closely with *all* parents when planning and delivering these subjects, and the initial guidelines around the need for schools to engage with parents have broadened out to encourage schools to work closely with parents when planning and delivering subjects and to ensure that parents know what will be taught and when. Emphasis is also given to ensuring that schools provide parents with examples of resources, so that parents are reassured about the subjects being taught, whilst also providing a means of continuing conversations started in the classroom at home. Although these updated guidelines address the issue of schools' readiness to engage with parents in relation to their children's learning, there is a lack of acknowledgment concerning the varying levels of parents' own readiness to accept and internalise prevention concepts, as demonstrated in protests by parents against the inclusion of relationships education in primary schools (The Guardian, 2019). Moreover, there is a lack of acknowledgement regarding the important role that schools, with the support of external organisations, have in being prepared to educate parents. As outlined in this study, if families are not made aware of the influence that they exert on their children's attitudes towards these subjects, then attempts to empower children may be ineffective (Foshee et al., 2011).

Furthermore, a child centred approach to the concept of readiness would ensure that children are consulted during the development of educational programmes so that children's interests and needs are central to their learning. It is unclear whether children were consulted during the development of the initial guidelines for relationships education in primary schools, however primary school children were represented in the profile of those responding to the Government's initial consultation - a total of 66 primary school children representing 29% of all children and young people of school age who responded - (DfE, 2019), suggesting that the views of younger children were taken into account. Engaging with children as the target audience is an important aspect of ensuring readiness and if the

needs and interests of children are not taken into account during the development of programmes, there is a risk that programmes of learning aimed at children will lack relevance and meaning for them.

Government policy level: content

Relationships education is an innovative area of work for primary schools and Government's proposed guidance includes a definition of relationships education for schools. The guidance provides a list of what 'pupils should know by the end of primary school'. Key areas of knowledge to be covered include friendships, family, boundaries, bullying, stereotypes and online relationships (DfE, 2018a). However, this is not broken down into year group or key stage, neither is the content of lessons specified. Schools will need support in order to translate the current mix of recommendations and requirements included in the guidance into practice, and an unambiguous curriculum programme will be necessary in order for schools to effectively implement their statutory responsibilities. Furthermore, although the guidance focuses on teaching children how to recognise healthy friendships and family relationships, there is a lack of focus on teaching children how to recognise unhealthy aspects of relationships, and no reference to teaching primary school children about domestic violence. There is an assumption that young children will be able to recognise negative aspects of relationships, particularly those associated with domestic violence, by teaching them about the positive characteristics of relationships. However, findings from the current study emphasise that children need explicit information in order to learn effectively. The PSHE Association has prepared support materials to help schools to evaluate their current relationships education provision (PSHE, 2018) and a 'curriculum design tool' has been prepared by the Sex Education Forum (NCB, 2018) in recognition of the need for schools to have clear and structured plans in place in preparation for these new statutory requirements.

Practice level: readiness within schools

As this study highlights, prevention education cannot be fully effective if it is delivered within an organisation or group where readiness at different levels across the school has not been achieved (Howarth et al., 2018). Ensuring schools' readiness for prevention work needs to be part of the task of programme implementation. Improving readiness could

include preparing schools at the whole school level. Through a process of sustained dialogue with schools, those delivering programmes can help to raise awareness among the whole staff group of a programme's aims and objectives prior to implementation. This is likely to increase the commitment of the wider school to the programme goals both during delivery and subsequently. This could also help to alleviate staff concerns around 'sensitive' topics prior to implementation and help shift unfavourable attitudes, particularly in schools where the school ethos does not support values embedded within relationships education. The recent change in Government policy in England and Wales means that schools will become responsible for the delivery of relationships education and this policy imperative may ensure change occurs within schools in ways that other approaches may not. However, effective implementation cannot rely on motivation coming from the outside alone: it also requires school staff to be committed to the aims of prevention education whose aim is to empower children.

Schools have an important role in supporting parents to engage with their children's learning (DfE, 2018) and this study raises questions about how parents can be meaningfully prepared and engaged in relationships education. Programme developers might support schools in this process by developing written forms of information to raise awareness of the rationale and aims of this form of education. This could be strengthened through the provision of information sessions for parents which may provide the opportunity to address any concerns and increase parent's confidence in this area of their children's learning (Robinson et al., 2017). Improving the readiness of schools would also ensure that children are better prepared. Providing children with clear information about programme content beforehand would form part of this process so that children feel better informed and therefore prepared to be engaging in the topics. Teachers might also increase children's readiness by discussing why relationships education is being taught and why the school considers it to be important in advance. Demonstrating a commitment to the subject-matter is likely to resonate with children so they too are better prepared to engage with it.

Through their observation of programme delivery, teachers can begin to familiarise themselves with the material and learn how to discuss the issues with children. This process is likely to help staff to feel better prepared to engage with topics themselves in the future. However, learning would be restricted to those teachers who are present at the time of delivery. Programme providers could therefore support schools further by building opportunities for whole staff training into their programmes, and this could include providing training to support staff to identify where opportunities lie in raising issues and

making connections to the work across the curriculum once programmes end. However, in the long term, teachers will need relevant training at the qualifying and post qualifying levels as well as support in dealing with issues which are likely to reverberate as a consequence of including relationships education within the core curriculum. Government's recent guidance on children's mental health strategy (DfE, 2018b), indicates that schools should ensure they have clear systems for early identification, intervention and referral to experienced professionals which could include designated counsellors for every school. This joined up approach towards children's well-being could help ensure schools are better supported to deal with issues on their own.

Practice level: content

In taking account the organisational contexts in which interventions are delivered, programmes of work need to be tailored to meet the needs of children and schools in order to enhance the likelihood of effective engagement. For example, classes in which bullying is an issue will have different requirements to those where this is not an issue (Fox et al., 2014; Stanley et al., 2011). Similarly, if programmes address issues which are not encountered by children, this is likely to result in children feeling disengaged with programme material. As discussed in Chapter Seven, some aspects of programme content are driven by funding priorities which set out specific outcome indicators, thereby influencing decisions around how programmes are devised and the topics to be included. However, it is essential that programmes are responsive to local need and ensuring that topics have relevance for individual audiences needs to be understood and addressed by those driving decisions on the content of programmes. Taking a child centred approach where children are understood as social actors who shape and are shaped by their circumstances (James et al., 1998) would ensure that the differing needs and interests of children within their communities are provided for.

As discussed in Chapter Two, gender is frequently obscured in relationships education (Stanley et al., 2015) and there is often a resistance to adopting feminist discourses to explain the causes of interpersonal violence (Tutty et al., 2005). Whilst unequal power relations and gender-based violence are controversial subjects, it is argued that relationships education which clearly address the root causes of gender inequality and gendered power relations is essential in the prevention of domestic violence (Lombard and Harris, 2017; Reed

et al., 2010). In order to encourage children to explore gender, learning needs to be situated in children's everyday experiences, so that messages are meaningful and applicable to them. This would ensure that gender is visible in their daily lives, for example, raising discussions with children in response to topics in books or incidents in the classroom in order to encourage children to understand contextualised understandings of gender (Nayler and Keddie, 2007).

The task ahead: implications for future research

This research contributes to the underdeveloped body of knowledge regarding integrated prevention programmes for younger children by providing evidence in respect of one prevention programme targeted at primary school children in England. Changing government policy towards statutory relationships education in primary schools means that this emerging field of research will require further development. Future directions of research in this area will need to consider how Government's new policy translates into practice, including what impact the introduction of statutory relationships education has in primary schools and how marginalised subjects become embedded within the core curriculum. Future studies might consider some of the questions addressed in the current study around the impact of this learning on primary school children both in the short and long-term, how learning occurs for children at different stages of their primary school career, what makes for successful implementation of learning, and how this occurs within different contexts and for different groups of children. Key questions should address how change has occurred at the school policy level, what teacher training is available and how effective it is. Consideration of further questions including those identified above such as how readiness is achieved for schools, how children and parents can be prepared and engaged, how programme developers can support schools, how children as social actors can contribute to programme design, and the suitability of material for younger children would be valuable. Statutory relationships education in primary schools is likely to increase schools' demand for these types of programmes and a well-developed body of evidence will be increasingly necessary to assist schools in making informed decisions about which programmes to take up to support their teaching. This would also enable government and other policy makers to understand what makes for effective prevention programmes in schools and whether they can provide a useful response to domestic violence at both national and global levels.

The different bodies of theory which have been drawn on for this thesis have proved valuable for conceptualising prevention programmes targeting young children in primary schools. Placing school-based prevention work in a framework of feminist and childhood sociology theories enables the conceptualisation of programmes as a tool for the empowerment of children, where children are encouraged to recognise and assert their rights and to actively seek support. Through this approach, children are understood as dynamic and participatory in their own construction of knowledge (Morrow and Richards, 1996), and programmes could employ approaches which offer real opportunities for active learning. Through a children's right's lens, which emphasises 'participatory' approaches, programmes can be developed in collaboration with children in order to enhance their relevance and appeal for young audiences in their current lives, rather than future lives as adults (Jenks, 1996). These approaches conflict with public health prevention theory with its emphasis on future risk and harm. This conflict is compounded through the delivery of programmes in educational settings where differential power relations result in children having little choice whether to participate in school-based activities, particularly those activities viewed by adults as in a child's best interests in order that they acquire skills to keep themselves safe from potential harm. Findings from this study expose the inherent tensions between programmes which aim to engage, enlighten and empower children whilst adopting a public health approach to prevention. Empowerment requires programmes to acknowledge children's own understandings of the extent of their agency in the context of child-adult power relations (Mayall, 2002), particularly when programmes are delivered in the school environment where children often wield very little power.

Locating programmes within a child-centred framework would ensure the conceptualisation of children as people with rights and agency, in the context of their minority status, and this would be addressed within programme design, delivery and content. Programme developers are not always clear about which theories have informed their thinking, even when theories of change are included, although the current evidence regarding theories of change in the published literature is currently limited (Stanley et al., 2015). The theory informing programme models could be explored more fully in future research on programme impact where children contribute to programme design or where different approaches to developing awareness of gender-based violence are addressed.

Reflecting on my experience of undertaking this study

A number of challenges were encountered during the process of conducting this evaluation and consideration of these issues may be useful for future school-based evaluations.

Limited funding and the need to deliver programmes widely means that currently organisations like Tender lack the resources to prepare schools adequately for programme delivery; for example, Tender's current approach to the recruitment of schools is through communication with one member of senior staff. The implications of this for evaluation of the programme were that the wider school staff were not fully aware of the programme aims and content and consequently were unprepared for both delivery and evaluation. Relationship building with senior school staff and class teachers was therefore essential both before and throughout the duration of the fieldwork. As I was reliant on class teachers to assist with data collection including: the acquirement of parent and child consent, survey administration, organising rooms for focus groups and taking part in interviews, developing a rapport with teachers (Trapp et al., 2012) was important to facilitate effective communication and to support teachers to carry out the required tasks. This process of relationship building was initiated through a face-to-face briefing session one week prior to delivery to ensure teachers were aware of their roles and responsibilities. This process of relationship building was equally applicable to children and efforts to build a rapport with children (Punch, 2002) were a central concern during fieldwork, as discussed in Chapter Three.

Primary schools may not be familiar with participating in research and therefore it cannot be assumed that staff understand the independent position of the researcher from the programme under evaluation. The need to clarify my position became evident in the initial debrief meeting in two of the schools participating in this study and an explanation of my role and independent position was offered during these face-to-face meetings. This issue was important to resolve, and one which I had not anticipated beforehand. As teachers were responsible for introducing me to their class, it was essential that they understood and introduced me appropriately to the children. Anticipating the likelihood that children would not be familiar with the process of engaging in research meant that plans to ensure that children understood the nature of the research and their engagement in it were an essential part of setting up the study. The likelihood that primary school staff may not be familiar with engaging in research should be borne in mind both in planning school visits and for the

duration of fieldwork; uninformed teachers may be wary of unfamiliar visitors in schools particularly in private 'adult' spaces such as staffrooms and researchers need to be sensitive and responsive to these issues. Children can also be uncomfortable around unfamiliar adults, and I was alert to this throughout the time I spent both in the school and in the playground (see discussion in Chapter Three).

Research is not a priority for school staff and researchers should be aware of the need to minimise the amount of disruption for schools taking part in research. To achieve this, fieldwork should be well planned and the mechanics of conducting fieldwork, such as organising space for conducting focus groups, should be anticipated in advance. In this study, the procedural planning took place both before the fieldwork began and in briefing discussions with teachers, including decision making around how teachers should administer surveys within their individual classes. Attempts to minimise workload for teachers, for example by including clear instructions to read to children prior to survey completion and attaching envelopes to surveys ready for sealing and collection, meant that the burden of these tasks did not fall on teachers.

It is also important to remain mindful that schools are not identical and their character and ethos can vary. This requires a flexible approach to working within the confines of the school setting, for example children in faith schools may be required to spend parts of the school day in assemblies for collective worship, particularly during religious celebrations. Furthermore, the connection and dynamics between staff can vary considerably between schools and relationships between staff can impact on the extent to which staff are prepared to engage and cooperate with fieldwork. However, teachers' reluctance to engage in research can be alleviated if the process of rapport building has been planned for and carefully executed. Efforts to build good relationships during the main data collection phase meant that teachers and children were also willing to assist with survey data collection when they were re-contacted at the six months follow up stage.

In the process of doing this research I have become increasingly aware of the power imbalances between adults, including adult researchers, and children, particularly within the primary school setting. Children are not used to being asked to reflect upon their experiences of their education, nor are they given choices regarding their own participation in school-based activities. They are however expected to conform to the demands and expectations placed on them by adults. This causes a number of disparities when conducting research in the primary school setting where children are asked to critically

reflect on their learning, particularly with an adult researcher who painstakingly ‘informs’ children about their rights to dissent. Children understand their minority status in relation to adults, particularly in the school setting, and I became increasingly aware of the subtler ways in which children demonstrated their discomfort, particularly in relation to the potentially sensitive nature of relationships education. Taking a reflexive approach throughout the research process and beyond ensured that considerations such as the potential tensions between children’s vulnerability, their agency and rights to participation, as well as a critical and developing awareness of my own understanding and construction of childhood, were fundamental to the research process.

As described in Chapter Three, while recognising children as social actors, it was not possible to ensure their participation in all elements of the research. Although I was able to test the research tools with children in the pilot phase, in the absence of a prolonged time period before data collection commenced, children did not participate in the research design. The discussion in Chapter Three describes how children’s involvement could have developed further and the implications of not doing so. The difficulty for this study was that time was limited by adult gatekeepers and future research which includes how children as social actors can contribute to programme design and programme evaluation would be valuable.

Reporting back

A report of the findings from this study was made available to Tender in September 2019. The report outlined findings regarding the impact of the programme on children’s understanding and participants’ experiences of the programme. The processes and mechanisms which appeared to be more successful in helping children to learn were also identified, and the report specified areas where revisions to programme content could be made. A summary of the report has been prepared for the three participating schools but will be held back until schools re-open following temporary school closures in response to COVID-19. Teachers are encouraged to share research findings with their pupils in an assembly, however children who participated in the study in 2016 will now have moved to secondary school and therefore cannot be contacted. Consent was obtained from Tender for the main report to be made available to schools if requested.

Concluding comment

Findings in respect of programme implementation, including the need for programmes to work in partnership with schools to improve readiness, have the potential to inform future decisions about programme strategy. Government's statutory guidance and regulations for schools on relationships education draws attention to the value of working collaboratively with external partners to enhance the delivery of subjects, recognising the specialist knowledge and approaches used by organisations to engage with children. As much of the expertise and skills required to deliver these subjects is currently located in third sector external organisations, meaningful collaboration between schools and such organisations will be key to ensuring effective implementation of relationships education for primary school children (Fox et al., 2014). Results from the consultation on the proposed guidance and government's response to it were published in 2019, and with policy due to come into effect from September 2020, such collaborations need to develop rapidly. The skills and knowledge that reside in organisations like Tender, and which have been identified and amplified through small-scale evaluations such as this, have the potential to inform a new generation of school-based prevention work aimed at ending domestic violence.

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Appendices

Key to Appendices

		Page:
Appendix 1	Changes to research tools from pilot	303
Appendix 2	Children meeting script	304
Appendix 3	Child information leaflet	305
Appendix 4	Child consent form	306
Appendix 5	Parent information leaflet	307
Appendix 6	Parent letter and opt out form	309
Appendix 7	School information leaflet	310
Appendix 8	Child debrief leaflet	312
Appendix 9	Adult debrief leaflet	313
Appendix 10	Healthy Relationships - Survey 1	315
Appendix 11	Healthy Relationships - Survey 2	319
Appendix 12	Health Relationships - Survey 3 (Final Survey)	324
Appendix 13	Observation sheet	328
Appendix 14	Facilitator interview schedule	335
Appendix 15	Child focus group schedule	337
Appendix 16	Teacher interview schedule	340
Appendix 17	Parent interview schedule	342
Appendix 18	Overview of participating schools	345

Appendix 1 - Changes made to the survey as a result of the pilots

- 1- Question 1 was changed from 'Your name' to 'Your full name' to clarify that I wanted the children to write their first and their second name
- 2- The wording of question 4 was changed from 'Do you have a disability or *special need*?' to 'Do you have a disability or *learning difficulty*?' to reflect the language better understood by the children
- 3- Some reformatting was needed in the tick box questions to ensure that the answer heading options were aligned with all the questions below it
- 4- The wording of tick box question (f) was changed from 'I can trust my feelings about whether a touch is good or bad' to 'I can trust my feelings about whether the way someone touches me is good or bad' as there was confusion about what 'a touch' meant
- 5- The wording of the last tick box question (k) was changed from 'If a friend is feeling *worried* about something , its right to tell their secret to an adult you trust' to 'If a friend is feeling *very upset* about something..' to make the significance more clear
- 6- Question 9 on the Second Survey was changed from 'Have you enjoyed taking part in this project?' to 'Did you enjoy taking part in the two day Healthy Relationships project at school?' as there was some confusion about whether I was referring to the research or the Healthy Relationships workshop

The children made a number of positive comments about the survey and information sheets:

- 1- Including a lot of colour on the survey and information sheets made them more interesting to look at
- 2- Giving a brief explanation of what consent is on the Consent Form was helpful
- 3- Highlighting 'This is not a test' on the front sheet was reassuring
- 4- Having a smiley face at the end of the survey was a nice touch
- 5- Putting the survey in a sealed envelope once finished ensured that the children knew their answers would not be seen by anyone else

Appendix 2- Children meeting script

Hello everyone. My name is Nicola and I'm a student from a University in Lancashire. I've come to see you today to tell you about a research project that I am doing and that I'm inviting you to take part in. I'm not going to talk for very long and you can ask me questions about it while I'm talking.
Do you all know that next week you are going to have visitors in schools for two days to do a work shop with you about healthy relationships? My research project is to find out what children think about the healthy relationships workshop and what sorts of things you learn from it.
You don't have to take part in my research and if you decide you don't want to that's absolutely fine. If you decide you would like to take part in my research your teacher will ask you to read and sign this consent form to say that you agree to take part.
Then your teacher will ask you if you would like to do a short survey before the work shop starts and then ask you if you would like to do the survey again when the workshop ends. This is the survey. It's definitely <u>not</u> a test and there are no right or wrong answers – I'm just interested in finding out what sorts of things you think before the work shop and then what sorts of things you think after the workshop. It will take about 10 minutes to do and your teacher will give you time to complete it in your class. If you decide to do it, they will ask you to do it on your own and not look at anyone else's answers, but you can ask your teacher anything that you're not sure about. Then when you finish you can put the survey in the envelope and seal it so no one else will see your answers apart from me. Then you will do the same survey – which is this colour – at the end of the workshop. Do you have any questions so far?
If you decide to take part I will also invite you to take part in a small discussion group with about 4-5 other children from your class to find out what you thought about the Healthy Relationships workshop. If you would like to take part in a discussion group your teacher has said that you will be able to leave your classroom to speak with me for about 30 minutes and as a group we will go to another classroom to talk in our group.
You can take part in just the survey or both the survey and discussions group, or neither – it's up to you! If you would like to take part in a discussion group with me, there is a page at the end of this survey where you can tick the box and write your name. Then tear the page out – like this – and give the page to your teacher. Then put the survey when you have finished into the envelope like you will do for the first one. I will only be able to speak to about 6 children, so if you say you would like to take part in the discussion and you're not picked, it will just be because your name wasn't drawn. Check any questions?
I'm going to come back to school when you do your healthy relationships workshop. I will watch your class take part and I will write some notes to remind me what happened.
I've got some leaflets about my research which reminds you of everything I've said today and you can take this home to keep. I've also got a letter and a leaflet for you to take home to give to your grown-ups. It says the same sorts of things that your leaflets say. IT'S VERY IMPORTANT THAT YOU TAKE THESE HOME AND GIVE IT TO YOUR GROWN UPS.
THE MOST IMPORTANT THING TO REMEMBER IS THAT IT'S COMPLETELY UP TO YOU IF YOU TAKE PART IN MY RESEARCH OR NOT. Even if you say yes but then change your mind at any time, that is perfectly ok. No one except me will know what you write in your survey and only me and the people in your group will know what you say if you do the discussion group. I will use what you tell me to write a report for my university but I won't put who said it. Ok, that's all I have to say. Does anyone have any questions?

3. Healthy Relationships Research Project - Information for Children

- Hello! My name is Nicola. I am a researcher.
- I'd like to invite you to take part in a research project.

What is it about?

- I'd like to know what you think about the Healthy Relationships workshops you will soon be doing at school.
- I will find out if these workshops help children know more about healthy relationships.

What will happen if I take part?

- You will get a short survey at school before you begin your workshop and another when you finish. There are no right or wrong answers!
- I will watch your class taking part in the Healthy Relationships workshops and observe everyone in your class at break times for two days to understand more about how you get on together.
- I will also invite you to talk to me in small groups about what you think of the workshop. I can only include about ten volunteers in the discussion groups. Names will be chosen randomly so everyone has an equal chance of being picked. If you are not chosen, this is only because your name was not pulled out.
- I will speak to you again in a few months' time to see what you remember.

Do I have to take part?

- No! It's up to you if you want to join in or not. Whatever you decide is OK.
- Even if you say 'yes', you can change your mind at any time.

What will happen to the things I tell you?

- The people who do the Healthy Relationship workshop want to know what you think
- I'll write a report on what children tell me but I won't use your name.

What if I have any questions?

- You can ring or text me on 07342 193761 or email me at NJFarrelly1@uclan.ac.uk. If you have a complaint about this research please contact the University Office for Ethics at officerforethics@uclan.ac.uk
- Please ask me questions any time you like. You can also ask your teacher.

Thanks for reading.



4. Children's consent form



Hello! Do you remember me? I'm Nicola. I came to talk to you about the research I am doing at your school. **Your class are going to do a workshop about Healthy Relationships.**

I'm inviting you to take part in my research to find out what you think about the Healthy Relationship workshop.

There will be **two short surveys**. One before the workshop and one at the end.

I will watch your class taking part in the Healthy Relationships workshops and observe your class at break times to understand how you act together out of lessons.

I will also invite you to **talk to me in small groups at school** to tell me what you think. But, I'll only be able to talk to about ten children in your class.

Remember, **there are no right or wrong answers!** I just want to find out what you think.

I will use what you say to write a report, but I will not put your name.

If you decide to take part and then change your mind, that is perfectly ok. **You can change your mind at any time.**

If you would like to take part, **please fill in the form below**. This is called giving your consent.

If you don't want to do it, just leave the form blank. If you're not sure, just ask.

Thank you!

Nicola



Children's consent form

Yes, I agree to take part in the research.

My name is: _____

My school is called: _____

Today's date is: _____

5. Healthy Relationships Research Project - Information for Parents

What is this research for?

Tender is a London based charity that works to promote Healthy Relationships based on equality and respect using arts and theatre based education. They have arranged to visit your child's school shortly to deliver their two day Healthy Relationships project to the Year 6 children.

Tender want to find out what children, parents and teachers think about their Healthy Relationships project and have therefore planned for an evaluation of their project. As your child's school has arranged for Year 6 children to receive Tender's Healthy Relationships project, I am approaching you and your child to invite you to take part in the evaluation of the project. Only children and parents from those schools receiving the Healthy Relationships project are being approached to take part in the research.

The research will explore the impact on children's understanding of healthy relationships as well as children's, parents and teacher's views of the project.

Who is doing the research?

My name is Nicola, I am a PhD student from the University of Central Lancashire and I will be doing the research. The research has been approved by the UCLan Psychology and Social Work Ethics Committee.

Does my child have to take part in the research?

No. Children's participation in the research is voluntary.

If you do not want your child to take part in the research please return the opt-out form on the attached letter to your child's class teacher by the **[INSERT DATE]**. The Healthy Relationships project will be delivered to your child's class on **[INSERT DATE]**. You have the opportunity to opt your child out of the research before your child is invited to give their own consent to take part. Opting out of the research means **you only need to take action if you do not wish your child to take part**. If you do not return the opt out form this will be considered as giving your consent to invite your child to take part in the research. Your child can change their mind about taking part in the research at any time.

What will happen if my child takes part?

The research will be carried out during school time. The children will be asked to complete a short survey immediately before and after the project.

I will observe the children during the project and during break times to understand how they interact with each other.

They will also be invited to take part in a small discussion group with their friends from class the following week to share their views of the project with the group. However, I will only be able to speak to about 10 children and those children selected at random.

I will speak to the children again in a few months' time to see what they remember. All children taking part will be given a certificate to acknowledge their important contribution to this study.

How can I take part?

Your thoughts and feelings about this work in schools are important. If you would like to take part in a short discussion to tell me your views, we can talk either face to face or by telephone. Please contact me by email or phone to arrange a convenient time.

How will the research be used?

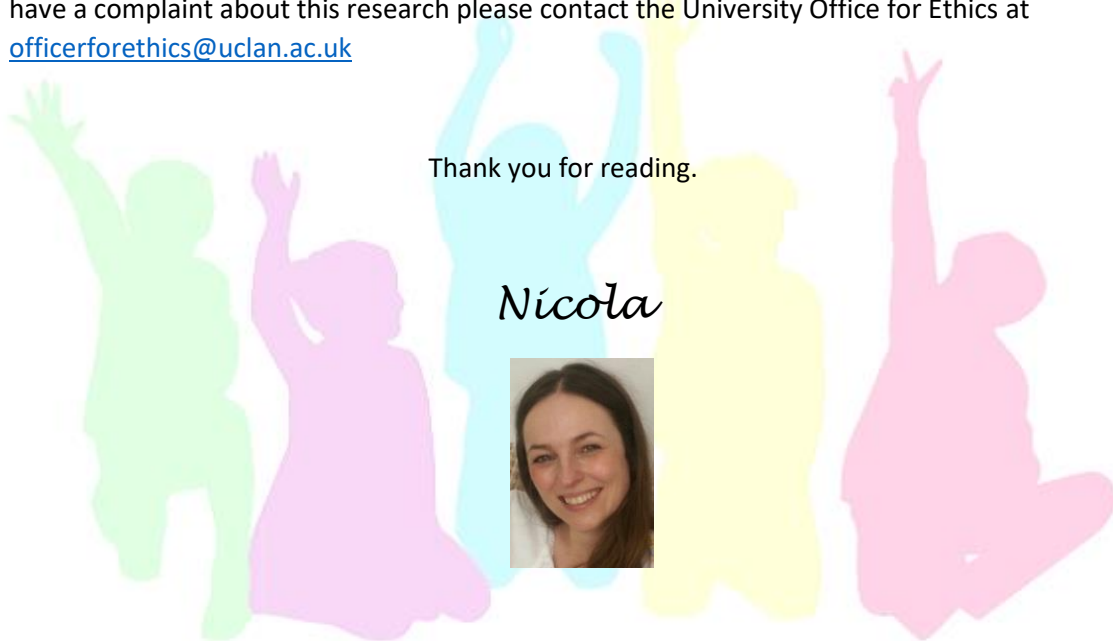
I will use the research findings to write my PhD thesis and journal articles. All data will be anonymous and confidential and quotes will not reveal a participants' identity.

What if I have any questions?

You can contact me, Nicola Farrelly at NJFarrelly1@uclan.ac.uk or on 07342 193761. If you have a complaint about this research please contact the University Office for Ethics at officerforethics@uclan.ac.uk

Thank you for reading.

Nicola



Dear Parent or Guardian,

Evaluation of the Healthy Relationships Primary Schools Project

Your child's class will soon be taking part in a two day workshop in school on Healthy Relationships delivered by two external facilitators from Tender.

Tender is a London based charity that works to promote healthy relationships based on equality and respect using arts and theatre based education.

Tender want to find out what children, parents and teachers think about their Healthy Relationships project and I would like to invite your child to take part in a small research project in school to find out what they think of the project.

Please see the enclosed 'Information for Parents' leaflet for further information about the research.

Your child's participation in this research is voluntary. If you are happy for your child to take part in the research, you don't need to do anything. If you **do not** want your child to take part, please complete the opt-out form at the end of this letter and return it to your child's teacher by the **[ENTER DATE]**. If you do not return the slip, your child will be invited to take part in the research at the start of the Healthy Relationships workshop.

I am also inviting parents to tell me their views on children's participation in the Healthy Relationships primary school project. Please email me at NJFarrelly1@uclan.ac.uk or phone or text 07342 193761 if you are interested in taking part.

Thank you for your help.

Yours sincerely,

Nicola Farrelly

ONLY RETURN THIS SLIP IF YOU DO NOT WANT YOUR CHILD TO TAKE PART IN THE RESEARCH.

I **do not give consent** for my child to take part in the **research** part of the Healthy Relationships project.

Child's name: _____

Parent/guardian signature: _____

(Please detach and return to your child's class teacher)

7. Healthy Relationships Research Project – Information for Schools

What is this research for?

Tender is a London based charity that works to promote Healthy Relationships based on equality and respect using arts and theatre based education. They have arranged to visit your school shortly to deliver their two day Healthy Relationships project to the Year 6 children.

Tender want to find out what children, parents and teachers think about their Healthy Relationships project and have therefore planned for an evaluation of their project. As your school has arranged for Year 6 children to receive Tender's Healthy Relationships project, I am approaching your school to take part in the evaluation of the project.

The research will explore the impact on children's understanding of healthy relationships as well as children's, parents and teacher's views of the project.

Who is doing the research?

My name is Nicola, I am a PhD student from the University of Central Lancashire and I will be doing the research. The research has been approved by the UCLan Psychology and Social Work Ethics Committee.

What will the research involve?

I would like to speak to the Year 6 children during my initial meeting with your school to talk to them about the study. They will be given an information about the research to take home and a letter and information leaflet for their parents. Any parents who do not wish their child to take part in the research are asked to return the opt-out form to the class teacher prior to the two day project. Children whose parents do not opt them out of the research will then be invited to take part in the research.

The research will be carried out during school time. Children who agree to take part will be asked to sign a consent form and complete a short survey immediately before and after the two day project.

I will observe the delivery of the two day project in school and observe the children's interactions at break times during the two day project.

Children will also be invited to take part in a small discussion group with their friends from class the following week to share their views of the project with the group. However, I will only be able to speak to about 10 children and those children selected at random.

I would like to speak to the children again in a few months' time to see what they remember. All children taking part will be given a certificate to acknowledge their important contribution to this study.

I will also invite one or two teachers at your school to take part in a short interview to understand their thoughts about the project. These interviews could take place when I return to your school the week following the two day project.

Parents are also invited to take part in a short interview with me and information about this is outlined in the information sheet for parents.

How will the research be used?

I will use the research findings to write my PhD thesis and journal articles. All data will be anonymous and confidential and quotes will not reveal a participants' identity.

What if I have any questions?

You can contact me, Nicola Farrelly at NJFarrelly1@uclan.ac.uk or on 07342 193761. If you have a complaint about this research please contact the University Office for Ethics at officerforethics@uclan.ac.uk

Thank you for reading.

Nicola



8. Healthy Relationships Research Project

Closing Information for Children

- Thank you for taking part in this study. Your feedback is very important to this research.

What was the research about?

- This research helped to find out what you learnt and what you thought about healthy relationships workshops.

What will happen to the things I have told you?

- I will use all the things children have told me to write a report, but I won't use your name.
- All the information you have told me is confidential which means no one can know what you have told me.
- I will send a summary of the things I find out to your teacher to give to you at the end of the study.
- If you decide you don't want the things you have told me to be used in my study, you can contact me by phone or email, or tell your teacher.

What if I have any questions?

- You can ring or text me on 07342 193761 or email me at NJFarrelly1@uclan.ac.uk. Or if you have a complaint about taking part in this study you can contact the University Office for Ethics at officerforethics@uclan.ac.uk or you can tell your teacher.

Help and support

- If you would like to speak to someone in private about something you are worried about you can call ChildLine on **0800 1111**. You can ring them anytime during the day or night and it won't cost anything or show up on a phone bill.

Thank you for your help.



Nicola



9. Healthy Relationships Research Project Debrief Information for Participants

Thank you for taking part in this study. You have made an important contribution to this study.

What was the research for?

The aims of the study were to explore the impact on children's understanding of healthy relationships as well as children's, parents, teachers and facilitators views and experiences of the healthy relationships project.

Findings from this research will contribute to our understanding of school based work on healthy relationships and could help to shape similar future interventions.

How will the research findings be used?

All the information collected during this study is being stored securely and anonymously. This means that the information is confidential and no one can know what you have told me.

I will use all the information I have collected for this study to write my PhD thesis and to write articles for academic journals but no one will be identified in anything I write. Any quotes I use will not reveal a participants' identity.

If you are interested in receiving a summary of the findings from this study, please send your name and contact details to me (details below) and I will send a summary of the research at the end of the study. All contact details will be stored in a password protected electronic database.

If you would like to withdraw the information you have provided for this study, please contact me within two weeks of receiving this leaflet.

How to get in touch

If you have any questions about this study you can contact me, Nicola Farrelly at NJFarrelly1@uclan.ac.uk or on 07342 193761. If you have any concerns or complaints about this research, please contact the University Office for Ethics at officerforethics@uclan.ac.uk.

Further sources of help and support

If you would like to speak to someone about any issues raised during the healthy relationships project there are a number of organisations that can provide help and support. A list of sources of help and support are provided on the reverse side of this sheet.

Thank you for your help

Nicola



Sources of Help and Support

ChildLine – 0800 1111 ChildLine is the free and confidential 24 hour helpline for young people and children in the UK.

NSPCC Helpline – 0800 800 5000 NSPCC have a 24 hour helpline for any professional or adult to report a concern regarding a child or get advice and support. If the child is in immediate danger, contact 999.

FGM Helpline - 0800 028 3550 or email: fgmhelp@nspcc.org.uk. NSPCC now have a specialised FGM Helpline for adults and professionals to use to report an incident, a child at risk or to get advice and support.

Forced Marriage Unit - The FMU is there to help people who are forced into marriage. Caseworkers understand the issues, family pressures and how difficult it is to speak out about these situations. They offer confidential support and information. Call: **(+44) (0)20 7008 0151** between 9am and 5pm Monday-Friday. Emergency Duty Officer (out of office hours): **(+44) (0)20 7008 1500**. Email: fmf@fco.gov.uk. Find out more at: www.fco.gov.uk/forcedmarriage

National Domestic Violence Helpline – 0808 2000 247. You can Freephone the 24 hour National Domestic Violence Helpline run in partnership between Women's Aid and Refuge. Calls to this number will not show up on BT Landline phone bills.

Broken Rainbow UK – 0300 999 5428– Broken Rainbow UK is the only National LGBT Domestic Violence Helpline providing confidential support to all member of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans (LGBT) communities and their family and friends. Find out more at: www.brokenrainbow.org.uk

Rape Crisis – 0808 802 9999– A telephone helpline service for women and girls who are survivors of rape, child sexual abuse, sexual harassment or any form of sexual violence. Find out more at: www.rapecrisis.org.uk

10. Healthy Relationships

First Survey

Please read this before you start:

- ✓ Read each question carefully before you answer
- ✓ **This is not a test** - there are no right or wrong answers!
- ✓ Don't look at anyone's answers and don't show yours to anyone else
- ✓ Put your hand up and ask your teacher if you have a question
- ✓ You can stop at any time even after you start it
- ✓ When you finish, put the survey in the envelope and seal it



Section 1 – About you

1. Your full name: _____

2. Are you: A girl ☐ A boy ☐

3. How old are you? _____

4. Do you have a disability or learning difficulty? Yes ☐ No

☐

If yes, please say what:

Section 2 – What do you think?

Read the following paragraph and then answer the questions below:

Emily and James have been girlfriend and boyfriend for two months. Emily's favourite outfit is her red dress. One day James asked Emily not to wear it anymore because he said it makes her look stupid.

5. What do you think Emily should do?

6. Why do you think she should do that?

7. Read each statement carefully and tick the box below the answer to say how much you agree **or** disagree.

Tick only **one** box for each statement.

	Agree a lot	Agree a bit	Not sure	Disagree a bit	Disagree a lot
a. If a girl has a boyfriend, she shouldn't spend lots of time with her own friends	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Mums and Dads should both be able to have a job if they want to	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Shouting is the only way to sort out an argument	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. If someone is bullying me, I should keep quiet about it	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. Its ok to say "stop" if I don't like how close someone comes to me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. I can trust my feelings about whether the way someone touches me is good or bad	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g. If a <u>grown-up</u> tells you to do something, you always have to do it	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h. If a <u>friend</u> asks you to do something, you always have to do it	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
i. You always have to keep secrets	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
j. If you have a secret that upsets you but an adult doesn't listen, you should find someone else to tell	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
k. When a child is feeling unsafe there are lots of places they might get help	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
l. If a friend is feeling very upset about something, it's right to tell their secret to an adult you trust	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

PLEASE TURN OVER THE PAGE...

Read the following paragraph and then answer the question below:

Sofia is feeling very confused. One day her best friend Harry asked her to send him a photo of her private parts because he said it would be funny. Harry said he would keep it a secret and wouldn't share the photo with anyone. He said if Sofia didn't send the photo she wouldn't be any fun. She doesn't want to send it but Harry is her best friend, so she doesn't know what to do.

8. What advice might you give to Sofia to help her?

Now please put your survey in the envelope and seal it

Thanks for your help!



11. Healthy Relationships

Second Survey

Please read this before you start:

- ✓ Read each question carefully before you answer
- ✓ The questions are the same as those in the first survey you did
- ✓ **This is not a test** - there are no right or wrong answers!
- ✓ Don't look at anyone's answers and don't show yours to anyone else
- ✓ Put your hand up and ask your teacher if you have a question
- ✓ You can stop at any time even after you start it
- ✓ When you finish, put the survey in the envelope and seal it

PLEASE READ THIS!

If you would like to take part in a discussion group with Nicola next week, tick the box on the very last page and **pull the page out**. Then give the page to your teacher.



Section 1 – About you

5. Your full
name: _____

6. Are you: A girl ☐ A boy ☐

7. How old are you? _____

8. Do you have a disability or learning difficulty? Yes ☐ No

☐

If yes, please say what:

Section 2 – What do you think?

Read the following paragraph and then answer the questions below:

Emily and James have been girlfriend and boyfriend for two months. Emily's favourite outfit is her red dress. One day James asked Emily not to wear it anymore because he said it makes her look stupid.

9. What do you think Emily should do?

10. Why do you think she should do that?

7. Read each statement carefully and tick the box below the answer to say how much you agree **or** disagree.

Tick only **one** box for each statement.

	Agree a lot	Agree a bit	Not sure	Disagree a bit	Disagree a lot
a. If a girl has a boyfriend, she shouldn't spend lots of time with her own friends	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Mums and Dads should both be able to have a job if they want to	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Shouting is the only way to sort out an argument	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. If someone is bullying me, I should keep quiet about it	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. Its ok to say "stop" if I don't like how close someone comes to me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. I can trust my feelings about whether the way someone touches me is good or bad	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g. If a <u>grown-up</u> tells you to do something, you always have to do it	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h. If a <u>friend</u> asks you to do something, you always have to do it	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
i. You always have to keep secrets	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
j. If you have a secret that upsets you but an adult doesn't listen, you should find someone else to tell	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
k. When a child is feeling unsafe there are lots of places they might get help	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
l. If a friend is feeling very upset about something, it's right to tell their secret to an adult you trust	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

PLEASE TURN OVER THE PAGE...

Read the following paragraph and then answer the question below:

Sofia is feeling very confused. One day her best friend Harry asked her to send him a photo of her private parts because he said it would be funny. Harry said he would keep it a secret and wouldn't share the photo with anyone. He said if Sofia didn't send the photo she wouldn't be any fun. She doesn't want to send it but Harry is her best friend, so she doesn't know what to do.

8. What advice might you give to Sofia to help her?

Section 3 – About the Healthy Relationships project

9. Did you enjoy taking part in the two day Healthy Relationships project at school?

Yes ☐ Sometimes ☐ No ☐ Not sure ☐

10. Is there anything you would like to change about the Healthy Relationships project?

Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure ☐

If yes, please say what:

Thanks for your help!



PLEASE GO TO THE NEXT PAGE...

Discussion group

If you would like to take part in a discussion group with a small group of your friends from class **next week**, please tick the box below and write your name.

Yes please! I would like to take part ☐

My name is:

I will only be able talk to about **10** children in your class. All your names will be chosen randomly so everyone has an equal chance of being picked. If you are not chosen, this is only because your name was not pulled out.

One last thing...

- **Pull this page from the survey and give it to your teacher**
- **Then put your survey in the envelope and seal it**

Thank you!



12. Healthy Relationships

Final Survey

Please read this before you start:

- ✓ Read each question carefully before you answer
- ✓ The questions are the same as the last survey you did
- ✓ **This is not a test** - there are no right or wrong answers!
- ✓ Don't look at anyone's answers and don't show yours to anyone else
- ✓ Put your hand up and ask your teacher if you have a question
- ✓ You can stop at any time even after you start it
- ✓ When you finish, put the survey in the envelope and seal it



Section 1 – About you

11. Your full
name: _____

12. How old are you? _____

Section 2 – What do you think?

Read the following paragraph and then answer the questions below:

Emily and James have been girlfriend and boyfriend for two months. Emily's favourite outfit is her red dress. One day James asked Emily not to wear it anymore because he said it makes her look stupid.

13. What do you think Emily should do?

14. Why do you think she should do that?

5. Read each statement carefully and tick the box below the answer to say how much you agree **or** disagree.

Tick only **one** box for each statement.

	Agree a lot	Agree a bit	Not sure	Disagree a bit	Disagree a lot
a. If a girl has a boyfriend, she shouldn't spend lots of time with her own friends	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Mums and Dads should both be able to have a job if they want to	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Shouting is the only way to sort out an argument	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. If someone is bullying me, I should keep quiet about it	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. Its ok to say "stop" if I don't like how close someone comes to me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. I can trust my feelings about whether the way someone touches me is good or bad	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g. If a <u>grown-up</u> tells you to do something, you always have to do it	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h. If a <u>friend</u> asks you to do something, you always have to do it	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
i. You always have to keep secrets	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
j. If you have a secret that upsets you but an adult doesn't listen, you should find someone else to tell	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
k. When a child is feeling unsafe there are lots of places they might get help	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
l. If a friend is feeling very upset about something, it's right to tell their secret to an adult you trust	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

PLEASE TURN OVER THE PAGE...

Read the following paragraph and then answer the question below:

Sofia is feeling very confused. One day her best friend Harry asked her to send him a photo of her private parts because he said it would be funny. Harry said he would keep it a secret and wouldn't share the photo with anyone. He said if Sofia didn't send the photo she wouldn't be any fun. She doesn't want to send it but Harry is her best friend, so she doesn't know what to do.

6. What advice might you give to Sofia to help her?

Section 3 – Since the Healthy Relationships project

7. Did you talk to your friends in class about anything you did in the Healthy Relationships project afterwards?

Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure ☐

If yes, please say what:

8. Do you think the Healthy Relationships project has helped you?

Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure ☐

If yes, please say how:

Thanks for your help!



APPENDIX 13. OBSERVATION SHEET

School:
Date:
Facilitators: Age range/Gender:

Note observations of:

1- How and what is delivered

2-Tone of delivery

3- Engagement/enthusiasm of children

Children: behaviours, comments, questions, interactions, children's engagement and enthusiasm, talking among themselves, areas of confusion, uncomfortable/difficult areas, gender and ethnicity dynamic, how they are allocated roles for assembly, have they bought into assembly?

Facilitator's: strengths and skills (i.e. encouraging children to talk and participate), control/regulating the group, engagement with children (do they block Q's or expand on them), are children given time to ask Q's after topics, are they confident to leave script and follow children's lead on Q's and comments

Teachers: reactions and involvement, teacher support, encouragement and interest, control/regulating the group, comments, engaged in topics, how schools shape/influence programme

General: atmosphere, layout of room, interruptions, children leaving room, other staff entering and leaving room, programme fidelity

Note approximate length of time of: facilitators speak, pupils speak, group discussion, activities

DAY 1:

No. of students in the group:

Task:	Time:
Notes:	

Task:	Time:
Notes:	

Task:	Time:
Notes:	

Task:	Time:
Notes:	

Task:	Time:
Notes:	

Task:	Time:
Notes:	

General:

DAY 2

Task:	Time:
Notes:	

Task:	Time:
Notes:	

Task:	Time:
Notes:	

Task:	Time:
Notes:	

Assembly notes:

General notes:

14. Facilitator interview schedule

- To remind you who I am, my name is Nicola Farrelly and I'm a PhD student from the University of Central Lancashire.
- I want to find out what you think about the Healthy Relationships workshop.
- I will use the information I collect from the interviews to write my thesis and journal articles and report back to Tender on the findings.
- Is it ok if I record our discussion? The only person that will listen to it is me so I can remember what you have said but you won't be identified in anything I write.
- Do you have any questions before we start?

- Background
 - What is your role with Tender? How long have you been a Tender facilitator?
 - Approximately how many times you have delivered the primary school project?
 - Do you deliver any other Tender projects (High School? How do they differ?)
 - What training have you received from Tender? (Is it adequate? Ongoing? Change anything? Are you monitored? Quality assured?)

- Views of DV prevention work in primary school
 - What are the aims of the project? Do you think these aims are achieved?
 - What are your thoughts about why schools participate in the project?
 - What are children's responses to the project? (Differences between schools?)
 - Does the project allow sufficient children's active participation? How?
 - What are teacher's responses to the project? (Do they engage? Differences between schools?)
 - What are your views of the project? (Is it appropriate for the age of the children? Could the content be more/less explicit?)

- Implementation/delivery of the project
 - What seems to work well and what works less well? For whom?
 - Is there anything you would change about the implementation/delivery of the project?
 - What are the barriers and facilitators to implementing prevention work in primary schools? (Teachers commitment? Awareness of DV? Time? Ofsted?)
 - Are you involved in delivering the staff training?
 - If yes, what does it involve?
 - Do schools participate in staff training?
 - What do you think are the barriers and facilitators to staff participation?

- To what extent do disclosures occur during the project delivery?
(Frequency?)
 - How are they dealt with? (By facilitator? By school?)
 - Do you feel skilled/confident to deal with disclosures?
 - Do you feel that schools deal with disclosures adequately? (do they need support?)
- Have schools expressed any anxiety about the project during delivery?
(What? How are these alleviated?)
- Are schools left with any resources after the project ends? (What? Are there any support mechanisms in place for schools for potential issues arising?)
- Impact
 - What impact do you think the project has on schools? (Children, teachers, parents, school community)
 - Do you think this work is sustainable? (How? Why not? Obstacles? Solutions?)
 - Do you receive any feedback from schools or Tender on project delivery?
(How? What?)
- End interview
 - Do you have any other thoughts about the project that you think are important? (Any difficulties?) Thank you very much for your time

15.Children's focus group schedule

- To remind you who I am, my name is Nicola and I'm a researcher which means I talk to lots of children like you who have taken part in the Healthy Relationship workshop at school to find out what you thought of it and what kinds of things you learned
- There are no right or wrong answers I just want to find out what you think
- I won't tell anyone what you tell me today, like your teachers, the only exception is if you tell me something which makes me worry you or another child are at risk of being hurt. If that happens I will talk to your teacher to make sure you are safe.
- If you don't want to answer any of my questions or if you decide you don't want to take part in the group discussion anymore that is fine, just let me know and you won't need to tell me why.
- Is it ok if I record our discussion? The only person that will listen to it is me so I can remember what you have said and I will use what you tell me to write a report but I won't put who said it.
- Do you have any questions before we start?

Ground rules

- ✓ Before we begin let's make some ground rules so that we all agree what to expect from this discussion
- ✓ Firstly we should agree that what is said within the group stays within the group – except if you tell me you or another child are at risk of being hurt by someone.
- ✓ Secondly, we are going to talk about what we thought of the Healthy Relationships workshop and not about our own personal experiences. Does everyone agree?
- ✓ Can you think of other ground rules you would like to have? (ask them to write them on a piece of paper such as be respectful, listen to each other, communicate kindly, everyone has a right to express their own ideas and opinions)

Photos to include

- HOUSE OF FRIENDSHIP (photo of one they created)
- MASTER/SERVANT (photo of facilitators performing)
- COMPUTER GAME SCRIPT (copy of script)
- POWER LINES (photo of their finished power line)
- CONFLICT COUNTDOWN (photo of facilitators performing)
- BILL OF RIGHTS (photo of one they created)
- SUPPORT TREE (photo of a tree they created)
- P.A.N.T.S (photo of the NSPCC washing line)

1. Before the workshop

Did you know you were going to be doing Healthy Relationships at school? (Who told you? What were you told? Was that ok with them?)

How did you feel about doing lessons on healthy relationships?
(Unsure/excited/unbothered? Did they want to learn about staying safe?)

Had you done any lessons about healthy relationships before in school? (Was it what you had expected? Where else do they learn about staying safe and healthy r/ships?)

2. How the programme has helped you *(Lay out photographs of the activities they did*)*

How do you think the workshop has helped you? (Have they used what they learnt?)

In what way do you feel safer now (in your relationships) than you did before?

What did you learn that you didn't know before? (Anything new/think differently?)

Did anything you learnt surprise you or confuse you? (Anything unhelpful?)

Use **photos of the workshop to reflect ways their understanding has been changed/enhanced:*

Support tree- Do you know who to talk to? Who would you tell? Would they like more information about what would happen if they did tell?

Bill of rights - Do you feel you are listened to?

Power lines - Do you feel you are equal (in class/playground)?

House of Friendship; Master/Servant; Conflict Countdown- Do you know more about what makes healthy/unhealthy relationships?

I-message; Conflict Countdown - Do you feel able to work out problems in friendships?

Sexual pressure - Do you feel you could help a friend? Know what to do?

3. Reflections *(Ask children to write their ideas down as they think of them?)*

Did you enjoy the workshop?

Enjoy/not enjoy? Activities, discussions, topics, facilitators, assembly presentation, doing something different

What did you think about the way the workshop was done? Is there anything you would change?

Too long/short? Too little/much information? Too rushed/slow? Group size?
Boys & girls together/separate? Over 2 days or shorter lessons over a few weeks?

What was it like having [FACILITATOR NAME] in your class teaching you about healthy relationships?

Anything good/not good about them? Facilitator or teacher to deliver?

Should other children do the Healthy Relationships workshop as well? (Younger?)
Is there anything else you would like to say?

End - “Thank you very much for your time.”

16. Teacher interview schedule

- To remind you who I am, my name is Nicola Farrelly and I'm a PhD student from the University of Central Lancashire.
- I want to find out what you think about the Healthy Relationships workshop.
- I will use the information I collect from the interviews to write my thesis and journal articles and report back to Tender on the findings.
- Is it ok if I record our discussion? The only person that will listen to it is me so I can remember what you have said but you won't be identified in anything I write.
- Do you have any questions before we start?
- Background
 - What is your role/what responsibilities do you lead on?
 - How is PSHE work delivered in school?
 - How is anti-bullying work delivered in school?
 - What school procedures are in place to safeguard children?
 - What do you think the schools main priorities are?
- Views of DV prevention work in primary school
 - Why did the school decide to run the programme? (DV issues in school? Ofsted? Free?) Whose decision? (Head? Majority?)
 - What did you know about the project beforehand? What were you told? Was this ok?
 - How were children selected to take part (if more than 30 children)
 - What would you say are the main aims of the programme? (explore awareness, understanding)
 - What are your views of the Healthy Relationships project? (explore commitment to DV prevention; Necessary? Harmful?)
 - Content?
 - Method of delivery?
 - Was it appropriate for the age of the children?
 - Should this work also be delivered to younger children? Why?
- Implementation
 - How well do you think the project was implemented and delivered? (Facilitators/barriers?)
 - Would you change anything about how the programme was implemented? (timetable, introduction to work, management/whole staff involvement in decision?) How do primary teachers manage to fit two days into curriculum?
 - How did you view your own purpose in the classroom as the project was being delivered?
 - Did the school involve parents in any way when deciding to run this workshop? (What? Why? Why not? Any problems?)

- Knowledge
 - Did you/other staff do the staff training offered by the project? (Why? Why not?) What did you think of it? (Important? Not relevant?) Any previous training?
 - Are you aware of any disclosures as a result of the workshop? (How were they dealt with? Ongoing support to respond to disclosures? Do they want support?)
 - Do you/staff generally feel skilled/confident to deal with potential issues arising from the work? (Training/development/support needs?)
 - Has there been any discussion in the other classes about the issues?
 - Will you do anything with the class based on the project or anything with other classes?
 - Are schools left with any resources after the project ends? (What? Are there any support mechanisms in place for schools for potential issues arising?)

- Impact
 - What impact has the project had on the school community? (children, teachers, parents) (positive/negative) (change in attitudes, improved relationships)
 - Are the issues covered in the programme an issue in school? (i.e. bullying, DV at home, safeguarding, FM)
 - Is this work sustainable? (How? Why not? Obstacles? Solutions?)

- End interview
 - Are you aware of any other positive effects or problems as a result of the project?
 - Any other comments? Thank you very much for your time.

17. Parent interview schedule

- To remind you who I am, my name is Nicola Farrelly and I'm a PhD student from the University of Central Lancashire.
- I want to find out what you think about the Healthy Relationships workshop recently delivered to your child's class.
- I will use the information I collect from these interviews to write my thesis and journal articles and report back to Tender on the findings.
- Is it ok if I record our discussion? The only person that will listen to it is me so I can remember what you have said but you won't be identified in anything I write.
- I won't tell anyone what you tell me today, the only exception will be if a disclosure is made that a child is at risk of harm. In this event the school safeguarding policy will be followed.
- Do you have any questions before we start?

- Background
 - Can you please tell me your age and what you do?
 - What class is your child/children in? (if child not in Y5/6)
 - How are you involved in school life in general?
(PTA/volunteering/fundraising)

- Implementation
 - How did you find out the children were going to be doing the Healthy Relationships workshop? (How? School? Child? My letter? What were they told? Was this ok? Is parent consent necessary?)

- Views of DV prevention work in primary school
 - Why do you think the school decided to run the programme? (explore understanding of schools motivation)
 - Do you know what the project is about?
 - If yes, what? What would you say the project is trying to achieve? (explore awareness/understanding)
 - If no, would you have liked some information about it? (explain briefly)
 - What are your views of this kind of work? (Support? Opposition? Apathy?) (responsible/harmful?)
 - What are the potential benefits? (Empower/protect children?)
 - Are there any concerns? (Cause worry? Ruin innocence?)
 - What are your views of children doing this kind of work *in school*? (is school right place? Alternative? What *should* schools be doing?)
 - Have you spoken to any other parents about the project?
 - If yes, what are other parent's feelings about the project?

- Impact
 - What impact do you think the project has had, if any? (children, teachers, parents) (positive/negative) (any further work or changes in school?)
 - Have you learnt anything as a result of the project? (What? How?)
 - Did your child tell you anything about what they did during the workshop? (if this hasn't come up earlier) What sorts of conversations have you had? (if child did workshop)
 - If your child was worried about something, how do you think you might help them? (i.e. ways to negotiate problems with friends/siblings/grown-ups)
 - Do you think parents want to be engaged in this area of work? Do you think they should be?
 - Where else do you think parents get their knowledge about healthy relationships from?
 - Are you aware of any changes in your child as a result of the project? (Any behaviour changes? Conduct? Articulating feelings more clearly? Inquisitive about issues learnt? Challenging others behaviour? Empowered? Knowledge of their rights?)
- End interview
 - What do you think your child would like to do when they grow up? What do you think you would like them to do?
 - Any other comments? Thank you very much for your time.

Appendix 18. Overview of participating schools

	School A	School B	School C	National average
*School type	Community	Academy	Community	
*Religious character	Does not apply	Roman Catholic	Does not apply	
*Percentage of special educational needs (SEN) pupils with a statement or education, health & care plan (EHC)	3%	1%	1%	3%
*Percentage of pupils with English not as a first language	78%	38%	70%	21%
*Percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals	26%	19%	23%	24%

*Data from [gov.uk/school-performance-service](https://www.gov.uk/school-performance-service) 2016/2017

School A

School A is located within a multicultural area of North London experiencing high levels of unemployment, gun and knife crime. This primary school is larger than average with two classes per year group. During the 2016/2017 academic year, the proportion of children with a statement of educational need (SEN) or education, health and care (EHC) plan was low and in line with the national average. Pupils came from a diverse ethnic group and range of backgrounds, and the majority of children spoke English as an additional language. The proportion of disadvantaged children who were eligible for free school meals was slightly higher than the national average.

School B

Situated in South London, School B serves a community experiencing high levels of unemployment, antisocial behaviour and gang violence. This is the only faith school in the study and teaches the Roman Catholic faith as a core subject within the curriculum. This was the smallest of the three schools with one class per year group. In 2016/2017, the proportion of children with SEN or EHC was lower than average. This is a culturally diverse school with a higher than average proportion of children from families who spoke English as

an additional language. The proportion of children eligible for free school meals was significant although lower than average.

School C

School C is located in a busy metropolitan district of London which experiences areas of both high and low deprivation. Similarly to School A, this school comprises two classes per year group and in 2016/2017 children came from a diverse range of ethnic backgrounds with a majority of children from families with English as an additional language. A low proportion of children had a SEN or EHC, and the proportion of children eligible for free schools was similar to the national average.