Evaluation of the Ariel Trust Violence Reduction Education Programmes in Primary Schools across Merseyside

In 2022/23 the Merseyside Violence Reduction Partnership (MVRP) funded the development and piloting of a suite of programmes delivered by Ariel Trust, an education charity in Merseyside. Ariel Trust developed three programmes called 'Send me a Selfie', 'Grassing or Grooming', and 'Skills to Resist Radicalisation' and trained teachers to deliver them to primary school children across Merseyside. These programmes used action-based learning theatre and role-play methods to teach primary school aged children about problematic situations, giving them the skills in how to respond appropriately, and ask for help if they are involved, including as a bystander. Liverpool John Moores University were commissioned to evaluate the Ariel Trust violence education programmes in primary schools across Merseyside. By the end of the 2022/2023 academic year, a total of 107 schools across Merseyside had delivered at least one of the programmes and over 6,000 students had taken part in the programmes.

Methods



Student Surveys

Pre and post programme surveys were distributed amongst schoolchildren who have received the Grassing or Grooming programme and/or the Skills for a Healthy Relationship: Send Me a Selfie* programme. These surveys measured knowledge on the content covered prior to and following the programme/s, help seeking behaviours and patterns, bystander attitudes and overall perceptions of the programme.



School Staff Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were carried out with school staff involved in the implementation and delivery of the Ariel Trust with their school. These interviews explored perceptions of the training received, programme delivery, perceived impacts, sustainability, and areas for development.



Stakeholder Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were carried out with the Ariel Trust lead and practitioners and an MVRP team member. These interviews explored content development, model of delivery, programme implementation, perceived impacts, sustainability, and areas for development.

Grassing or Grooming Programme Results

Percentage of students agreeing that they would feel confident explaining what grooming means to a friend



Pre: 25% Post: 80.7%

Percentage of students agreeing that if someone calls you a grass or a telltale they are trying to control you



Pre: 11.5% Post: 44.1%

Percentage of students agreeing that if they thought they saw someone who was trying to get involved in illegal behaviour they would report it to an adult



Pre: 79% Post: 94.8%

Percentage of students agreeing that they should never grass or tell on someone



Pre: 23% Post: 15.3%

Skills for a Healthy Relationship Results

Percentage of students agreeing that they understand what the word consent means



Pre: 46.4% Post: 76.4%

Percentage of students agreeing that they should always keep a secret



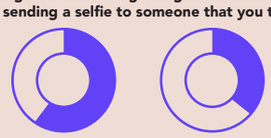
Pre: 42.4% Post: 28.2%

Percentage of students agreeing that they would feel comfortable asking for help from an adult if a friend was pressuring them to do something they didn't want to



Pre: 75.2% Post: 82.8%

Percentage of students agreeing that there is no harm in sending a selfie to someone that you trust



Pre: 60.3% Post: 35.7%

Changes in Help-seeking Behaviour

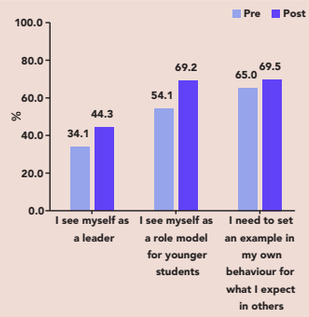
In both programmes combined, in post-programme surveys, a larger proportion of students have indicated that they were more likely to seek help from:



Parents:
Pre - 84.5%
Post - 91.3%

Helpline or Website:
Pre - 21.4%
Post - 26.2%

Changes in Leadership Skills



In both programmes combined, an increase in students' mean score on leadership and role model subscales was measured, with more children reporting seeing themselves as leaders and role models following their involvement in the Ariel Trust programmes.

Summary of Findings

Findings from the 2022/23 evaluation of the Ariel Trust violence prevention programmes suggested staff and students' perceptions of the programme content, and particularly the delivery style were very positive, with only a very small minority of students reported not enjoying the programmes (~5%). Critically, the programmes had significant positive impacts on students' knowledge and attitudes related to the topics covered, including knowledge on how to keep safe online, a strengthened understanding of grassing and grooming concepts, who to reach out to for help, and how to navigate difficult situations. Whilst further research and evaluation is required, findings to date suggest a number of key learnings for programme development, and overall support the continued implementation of the programmes across Merseyside schools in 2023/24.