

Self-leadership programme for young people

Improving young people's life skills and their ability to regulate their own behaviour and challenge others, to reduce risk of harm.

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Key details

Does it work?	Promising
Focus	Diversion
Topic	Crime prevention Child sexual exploitation and abuse Drugs and alcohol Ethics and values
Organisation	Gloucestershire Constabulary
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Region	South West
Partners	Police Business and commerce Education Health services Voluntary/not for profit organisation
Stage of practice	The practice is implemented.

Key details

Start date	July 2021
Scale of initiative	Local
Target group	Children and young people

Aim

The aim is that all young people:

- choose to be positive and effective personal leaders where they feel their voice is heard
- are valued
- can thrive with confidence in environments that they can't necessarily affect or alter themselves

Gloucestershire Constabulary does this by:

- providing a flexible, transformational self-leadership programme that equips young people in Gloucestershire with the essential life skills they need to deal with challenges today and in the future
- pre-empting the challenges of teenage years and enhancing the self-leadership and confidence of young people, by equipping them with tools and skills that will help them overcome some of their daily challenges

Intended outcome

The programme measures:

- emotional self-regulation
- understanding how to behave compassionately to self and others
- understanding the impact of how individuals talk to each other
- understanding of how to change and develop positive habits
- understanding the power of constructive compared to destructive conversations
- confidence in talking about self-leadership

Description

This self-leadership programme is also known as Boost. Boost has been created in partnership and collaboration. A 13-month pilot period began in July 2020 and the programme was rolled out full in Gloucestershire in September 2022.

In this programme, older students coach younger pupils in self-leadership. The older students receive a certificate for their role in delivering the programme, signed by the chief constable and the police and crime commissioner.

The programme is preventative, pre-emptive and proactive, helping young people to overcome challenges they face now and in the future.

Gloucestershire believes Boost is unique as a self-leadership programme for young people that is directly modelled on constructive thought patterns, constructive behaviour, and natural reward.

The programme reveals skills already within the participants. This helps young people to validate themselves rather than seeking external validation from others. It is not based on personal academic achievement or social background and is flexible to meet the needs of young people.

There are six modules in the programme that build on one other.

Modules

Treasure your breath

Grounding strategies encourage participants to self-regulate emotions, which helps with managing stress and regulating reactions to emotional situations.

Hack your mind

Consistent habits help participants improve and grow into the people they want to become. Habits are the building blocks of daily life and how we train our brains, and eventually become the bigger picture of our lives.

Walking softly

Support participants to focus less on comparing themselves to others and more on self-understanding. Also encourages them to be kind and compassionate to themselves to improve

resilience.

Discover superpowers

Social connections are influenced by how we communicate. This module supports participants to understand the power of constructive compared to destructive conversations, which is an essential social-emotional skill.

Leading from within

Demonstrates to participants that they already have the potential to be effective self-leaders, and can make progress in their lives by making good decisions that serve the person they want to become.

Being magnificent

Shows participants that they can all reach their own level of personal mastery and that success is an individual thing, but magnificence is for everyone.

Programme delivery

The six modules can be delivered either:

- intensively in one and a half days, at a 'camp' setting in a school hall or gymnasium
- as one module a week for six weeks

All resources are provided by Gloucestershire Constabulary, including a qualified teacher.

The programme is mostly delivered in secondary school but is flexible and can be delivered in any environment. It has successfully been delivered in educational alternative provision settings – for example, through charities working with vulnerable young people, through the hospital education service, and to police cadets.

Eligibility

The programme is accessible to all young people aged 10 to 18 years. It is free of charge in Gloucestershire, with no selection criteria.

Gloucestershire Constabulary approaches schools on an individual basis and invites them to take part. Most schools choose that their sixth formers are trained to deliver the programme to years seven or eight, but the programme has been delivered across all age ranges from 10 to 18.

Boost is promoted through the usual communication channels with schools, including the Gloucestershire Association of Head Teachers and other local education partnerships and organisations.

Some of the most vulnerable young people are contacted directly to encourage participation.

Partnership and collaboration

The programme is owned by Gloucestershire Constabulary. It was created in partnership with experts from education, mental health, wellbeing, emotional intelligence and resilience backgrounds, who joined to form a steering group. These experts volunteers their time freely to do something positive for the next generation.

Development since the pilot programme

In July 2020, following discussions about a distinct gap in support for young people in Gloucestershire, a Boost pilot programme began. By July 2021, the Boost pilot ended with over 300 young people contributing to the programme.

In October 2021, Boost received funding from the Home Office Safer Streets Fund. This allowed primary school pupils to take part. This too has been successful, involving year nine pupils delivering a mini version of the programme to year five pupils within their secondary school catchment area.

Almost 6,000 young people in Gloucestershire have now taken part in the Boost programme and many more will be taking part in the next academic year.

Discussions are ongoing with the Open University Centre for Policing Research and Learning about collaboration with other forces to extend the programme across the country.

Evaluation

Evaluation is carried out on the following levels.

- Pupil pre- and post-survey completion – to check knowledge.
- Debrief with staff and older students – for qualitative information, case studies and endorsements.
- Focus group activity for continuing programme development.
- Commissioning a longer-term study into the social impact and social value of the programme.

Overall impact

Following a significant update to the programme in August 2023, the Boost self-leadership programme for young people has expanded significantly across Gloucestershire and bordering counties in 2024. We have national and international interest in the programme and our progress is highlighted in our annual Impact Report.

In addition, we begin piloting the Emerging Adults version of the programme we have been developing from September 2024. This is targeted at 18-25 years and in particular to NEETs (Not in Education, Employment or Training) and Young Carers and their voice has influenced the content of this programme.

Participating students report improved knowledge from the programme. Measures showed their:

- understanding of how to behave compassionately to themselves rose from 55% to 84%
- knowledge about the impact of how they talked to people rose from 78% to 90%
- understanding of how to change and develop habits rose from 50% to 80%
- confidence in talking about self-leadership rose from 57% to 98%
- knowledge of how to turn a destructive conversation into a constructive one rose from 32% to 61%

Endorsements

I think the innovative and ground-breaking Boost programme is brilliant. Dealing with things like misogyny, which is all about a lack of respect of women, is a deep seated cultural problem that needs to be addressed at all levels of our society. The Boost programme instils amongst other things compassion, empathy and kindness as cornerstones of human-to-human interaction and social behaviour. This will help create lasting change to the way we treat those around us.

Chris Nelson, Gloucestershire Police and Crime Commissioner

There was one kid who got quite sad when we were leaving and gave us a hug and told us he loved us and he started crying. It's the coaching that it gives people. We have changed his life, 100% guaranteed, genuinely!

Year 12 student

The idea of year 12s and 13s working with year 6s and 7s is pure gold

Secondary school teacher

There just isn't anything else out there like this, or as strong.

Primary school teacher

Wow. This is magnificent. What you have done is phenomenal.

Community leader

This is real joined-up working. Boost is a leader in that the project has been amazing without treading on anyone else's toes.

CEO, Gloucestershire Community Foundation

Learning

- All organisations that have taken part in the Boost programme value that it's brought to them by Gloucestershire Constabulary. Some said they would not have taken part without that endorsement.
- All organisations insist on the supply of the Boost teacher to train, deliver and oversee the programme delivery. There are too many occasions where schools in particular are given a kit of information by a third party organisation and expected to deliver. They find this really unhelpful.
- It has built links between those organisations taking part and other parts of Gloucestershire Constabulary.
- Schools who weren't convinced that their sixth form students would take part were given an introductory session. The resulting demand to take part was extremely high.
- The programme can be delivered to any age group. The tools are for life.
- Establishing the Boost brand – including vision, mission, values and unique selling point – has helped to keep the development of the programme true to its original collaborative intent.

- Initial challenges around transporting resources (including tents) were overcome by recruiting and involving citizens in policing volunteers.
- To expand the programme, Gloucestershire Constabulary has recruited more teaching staff.
- A governance board was established to oversee all aspects of the programme, including safeguarding.
- Gloucestershire Constabulary found the most significant learning opportunity was how to deliver the programme to young people with the most diverse needs. The force met that challenge by listening, and being flexible and inclusive. They found this was particularly relevant when working with some of the most vulnerable young people in the county.

We continue to develop our research into the wider social impact of the programme and pathways to outcomes and expect to publish peer reviewed academic papers in relevant journals over the coming months.

In addition, independent research carried out during 2024 confirmed our professional view, that delivery of the programme over a number of weeks has more longer term impact on young people, particularly when supported by additional reinforcement messaging (which we have also implemented).

We continue to deliver the programme in a flexible way to meet the individual needs of the schools and organisations we work with so that it is relevant to their setting.

Best available evidence

Currently the [crime reduction toolkit](#) does not include information on self-leadership programmes for young people. However, it does include the best-available evidence on [mentoring](#) and [social skills training for children](#).

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Tags

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