

Police officers in the classroom supporting the PSHE curriculum

Multi-arm cluster randomised trial assessing the impact of direct police input in the teaching of sexual consent and the law to school pupils.

Key details

Status	Complete
Lead institution	College of Policing
Principal researcher(s)	Ella Rylatt-West ella.rylatt-west@college.police.uk
Police region	West Midlands
Collaboration and partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Durham University • The Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) Association • Thames Valley Police • West Midlands Police • Hertfordshire Constabulary
Level of research	Professional/work based
Project start date	October 2023
Date completed	March 2025

Research context

This project is one of three interventions currently being evaluated by the College of Policing that aim to reduce violence against women and girls. The other two are [forensic marking for domestic abuse](#) and [video responses to domestic abuse](#).

Police officers in the classroom supporting the PHSE curriculum

Sex and relationships education (SRE) is a compulsory part of the national curriculum, but the national picture for how schools teach SRE is variable. This means there is scope for a quality police-facilitated intervention in this area.

In a previous randomised control trial from the London School of Economics (LSE), officers contributed towards the delivery of lessons on drugs and the law in personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) lessons.

This research aims to build on previous research to develop a greater understanding of whether the introduction of police-facilitated lessons within schools on a different aspect of the law supports school students to perceive the police as procedurally just, fair and trustworthy in their decision-making and enforcement of the law. In this instance, the focus of the intervention is consent and the law.

Hypothesis

The research aims to answer the following research questions.

Does police input into PSHE lessons regarding sexual consent and the law:

- affect young people's perceptions of the police as trustworthy and procedurally just?
- increase young people's knowledge and practical understanding of consent and how the law operates in relation to it?
- support young people to feel confident in making informed choice and reporting instances where consent is breached?

Geographical area

Thames Valley, West Midlands and Hertfordshire

Target sample size

40 schools (around 6,000 young people)

Participants - inclusion criteria

30 schools per trial arm will be recruited (90 schools in total). This estimates an overall sample size of 11,700 young people. Randomisation will be taking place on a school level, to ensure all types of schools are represented in the intervention and control groups. The sample will be stratified against:

1. pupil premium percentage
2. whether the intervention is offered to year 9 or year 10 students

Interventions

The intervention takes place as a suite of three linked PSHE lessons on the topic of consent and the law. These have been developed by the PSHE association and aim bring a level of consistency and clarity to the teaching of consent and the law to young people. The lessons are one hour each. They will be taught to young people aged between 13 to 15 years (either year 9 or year 10 students) in English secondary schools within participating force areas.

Study design

This research is a multi-arm cluster randomised control trial of an education intervention within secondary schools in Thames Valley, Hertfordshire and West Midlands Police force areas. The relative impact of two modes of implementation of the intervention will be measured:

1. where the three lessons are taught by a teacher and police officer sequentially (that is, lesson one delivered by a teacher, lesson two by a police officer and lesson three by a teacher)
2. where only teachers deliver the three lessons

The new intervention (delivered in the two ways outlined above) will also be compared with school's usual PSHE teaching on consent and the law. Approximately 40 schools will take part in the trial. Randomisation will be taking place on a school level, to ensure all types of schools are represented in the intervention and control groups. The sample will be stratified against:

1. pupil premium percentage
2. whether the intervention is offered to year 9 or year 10 students

Outcome measures

The evaluation will cover both process and outcome elements, incorporating a range of research methods.

Firstly, data will be collected via the provision of three questionnaires:

1. prior to teaching
2. after the second lesson
3. six weeks/two months after the intervention

Interviews will also be conducted with young people who have received the new teaching intervention.

A process evaluation will be undertaken to understand how the intervention was implemented in practice. This will include observing officer training by the PSHE association, and observing teacher and officer led lessons. After the lessons have concluded, interviews will be conducted with teachers and police officers involved in the intervention. This will help understand experience of being part of the intervention, elements that worked well and areas for improvement going forward.

Findings

For more information on the findings, go to the following reports in the National Police Library:

- [Summary report](#)
- [Technical report](#)

Additional resources

- [Forensic marking for domestic abuse](#)
- [Evaluation of video first response \(VFR\) to non-emergency domestic abuse calls for service](#)

Tags

- [Violence against women and girls](#)