

Evaluation of police officers in the classroom supporting the PSHE curriculum

The summary report of the evaluation of police officers in the classroom supporting the personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) curriculum.

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There is a growing concern around sexual violence that is both experienced and perpetrated by young people, with an urgent need for effective and meaningful sex and relationships education for young people. The initiative of placing police officers in classrooms (PiC) to deliver a lesson to young people on sexual consent and the law was developed and trialled in response to these growing concerns.

The PiC trial related to personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) lessons given to pupils aged between 13 and 15 years of age (in Year 9 or 10). The trial was designed to compare:

- police delivering one out of three PSHE lessons on sexual consent and the law
- teachers either delivering all three PSHE lessons or their business as usual

Research method

The College of Policing secured funding from the Cabinet Office to evaluate a series of interventions designed to reduce violence against women and girls (VAWG). The aim of this evaluation was to understand the impact of police teaching lessons on the topic of sexual consent and the law on:

- pupils' knowledge and understanding of the topic
- trust and confidence in the police and confidence in reporting where consent is breached

The research involved a randomised control trial and process evaluation. In total, 39 English secondary schools from three police forces took part in delivering the intervention. Pupils completed a longitudinal questionnaire before the lessons, immediately after and a follow-up between six to and eight weeks later. Pupil interviews, lesson observations, teacher interviews, police officer focus groups and interviews with police force leads were also conducted.

Findings

PiC could improve pupils trust and confidence in police

In the police group (police officers delivering a lesson on sexual consent and the law), there was an indication of increased levels of trust and confidence compared to the teacher group and business as usual. While not statistically significant, these findings could be considered encouraging.

Pupils in the police group were more likely than pupils in either of the two other groups to say in interviews that they trusted the police more because of the police delivering the lesson on consent and the law.

PiC pupils appeared more engaged

Lesson observations showed that pupils in the police group:

- appeared more engaged
- asked more in-depth questions
- showed greater trust and confidence in the police

Pupils began to view the police as both:

- subject-matter experts on the topic of sexual consent and the law
- approachable adults they could turn to if they needed their help or support

PiC pupils more likely to report to the police

Pupils from across all three groups showed evidence of having learned something about consent. However, pupils in the police group:

- demonstrated a more nuanced understanding of consent and the law
- were more likely to say they would report incidents where consent may have been breached

Pupils, teachers and police see PiC as generally positive

Interview data showed that PiC was generally seen as positive by pupils, teachers and police. The teachers who were interviewed thought that having police to deliver a lesson was positive.

Teachers said they appreciated the new PSHE materials and found interactive elements, such as

the vignettes and opportunities to ask questions, helpful in deepening pupil's understanding.

Conclusions and implication

The research suggested that police in classrooms is generally a positive intervention with encouraging signs of:

- improving pupils' knowledge of consent and the law
- trust and confidence in the police
- likelihood of reporting an incident where consent is breached

It is important to note that none of the findings suggest that police delivering PSHE lessons in schools has a harmful or negative impact on pupils. Overall, findings and implications of this evaluation suggest that police in classrooms as an intervention should not be dismissed and is worthy of further testing.

- [Go to the full evaluation of police officers in the classroom supporting the personal, social, health and economic \(PSHE\) curriculum](#)

Tags

Violence against women and girls Domestic abuse Domestic violence