

Mentors in Violence Prevention Scotland Annual Report

April 2025 - March 2026



Mentors in Violence Prevention
Challenging Gender Based Violence, Everyone's Responsibility

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What is Mentors in Violence Prevention?

Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP) supports a whole-school approach to gender-based violence prevention. It is a peer education leadership programme in which senior pupils are trained and supported to deliver lessons to their younger peers. Developed in the United States by US Educator Dr Jackson Katz PhD, it was introduced to Scotland in 2012 and adapted for the culture and context of Scottish learners. In Scotland, it is now delivered in 244 Local Authority secondary schools, in some independent schools and in a few youthwork settings.

Mentors in Violence Prevention contributes to [Equally Safe](#), Scotland's strategy for preventing and eradicating violence against women and girls, and to Scotland's [Violence Prevention Framework](#). It is referenced in the Scottish Government ['Preventing and responding to gender based violence: a whole school framework'](#) and in other relational policies and plans such as the [Relationships and behaviour in schools: national action plan 2024 to 2027](#).

MVP lessons explore and challenge the attitudes, beliefs and cultural norms that underpin gender-based violence and give learners a language and framework to explore the issues. Two mandatory core lessons cover the impact of gender stereotypes, bystander theory and the scope of violent behaviour. Scenario-based lessons are then delivered which cover a range of topics including sexual harassment, consent, image-based abuse and coercive control. This year, the most frequently delivered sessions were 'Messaging' (exploring coercive control) and 'Corridor' (exploring violence when young people are dating). Supporting young people to develop healthy relationships and to recognise harms is at the heart of the [MVP programme](#).

The programme uses a bystander approach which allows learners to explore sensitive topics from the standpoint of an observer, rather than as victim or perpetrator, and allows options for safe interventions to be explored within a supportive environment.

Context

School staff in Scotland report a perceived increase in levels of misogyny and gender-based abuse among male pupils¹ in schools while sexual harassment is a frequent experience in schools². Police Scotland figures for 2024-2025 indicate increases in sexual crime, domestic abuse and convictions under the Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018 that tackles coercive control³. Sixty-seven percent of LGBTI learners in a survey in 2022 reported that they had experienced homophobic, biphobic or transphobic bullying during their time in school⁴.

These harms are not specific to school settings or to Scotland. The [World Health Organisation](#) (WHO) estimates that about 1 in 3 women worldwide have been subjected to physical and/or sexual violence in their lifetime. The United Nations sustainable development goals include [Goal 5 Gender Equality](#), with gender equality woven through most of the other Goals.

Scotland has demonstrated a commitment through legislation⁵ to the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) that enshrines the right for children to be protected from all forms of violence.

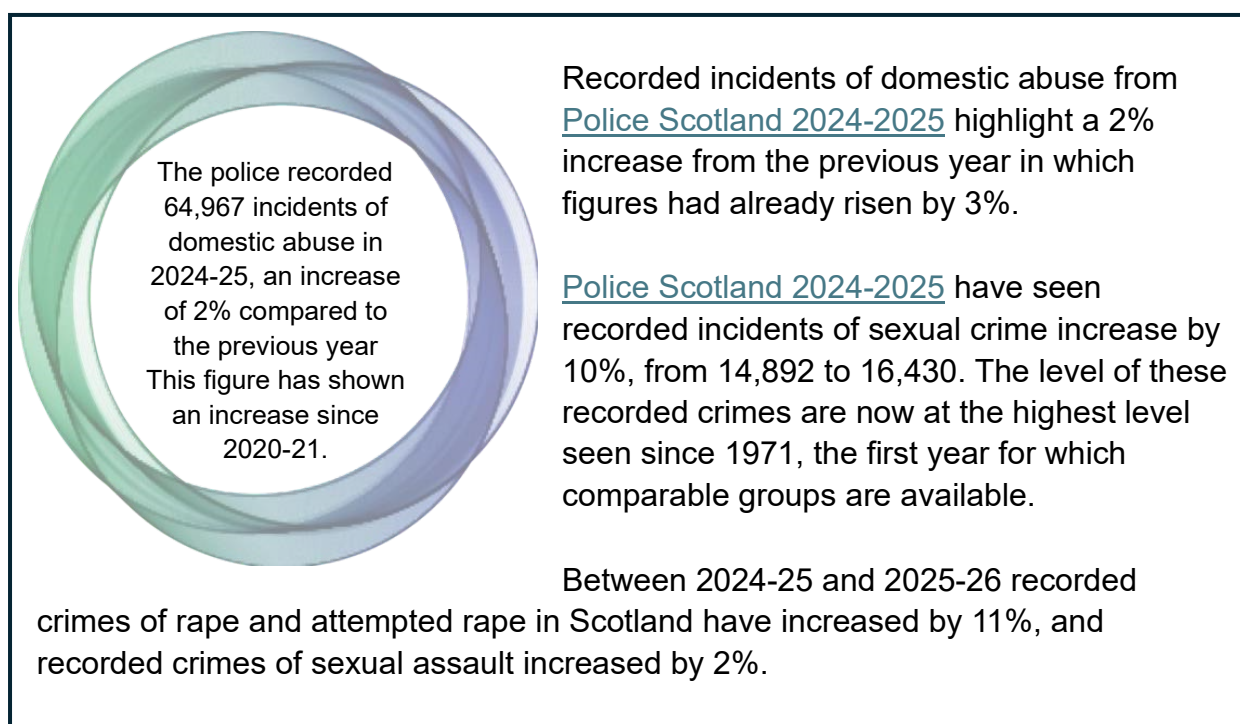


Figure 1 Domestic abuse and Sexual Crime Statistics in Scotland

¹ [Scottish Government 'Behaviour in Scottish schools: research report 2023'](#)

² [Sweeting, H., Blake, C., Riddell, J., Barrett, S. and Mitchell, K. 'Sexual harassment in secondary school: Prevalence and ambiguities. A mixed methods study in Scottish schools' PLOS One](#)

³ [Scottish Government 'Domestic abuse: statistics recorded by the police in Scotland, 2024-25'](#)

⁴ [LGBT Youth Scotland \(2023\) Life in Scotland for LGBT Young People: Education Report 2023](#)

⁵ The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation)(Scotland) Act 2024

The reach of MVP

This year, 244 schools have been confirmed to be delivering MVP as part of their curriculum. This is an increase from 234 confirmed schools in 2024-2025. This year, 3 schools delivered for the first time, 38 schools have restarted after a gap and 207 schools have delivered for two or more years⁶.

Based on an average of 32⁷ mentors per school, this means that this year 7,808 mentors (senior phase pupils) have delivered a minimum of 10,408 MVP lessons to 78,060 younger pupils⁸. This year, 178 MVP lessons were delivered by staff who took part in the Staff Delivery Survey indicating approximately 293 lessons were delivered across Scotland reaching 8,804 learners. Altogether, 94,672 learners have experienced MVP between 2025-2026.



Figure 2⁹ Number of Schools, Mentors and Reach of Lessons

Staff Professional Development

This year, 221 staff were trained by the national team to deliver MVP and approximately 248 staff were trained by Local Authority Trainers. This professional learning involved exploring gender-based violence, learning about the MVP programme and its rationale, and planning how to implement the programme. Participants included school staff and a range of partners including Women's Aid, Community Learning and Development, Police Scotland, Voluntary Agencies and Local Authority staff.

Two Train the Trainer events were held with a total of 18 participants.

⁶ This figure is based on information from co-ordinators, the School Lead Delivery Survey December 2025 and contact with schools. Where no information was available if a school had been delivering for several years it was predicted that they were still delivering.

⁷ The average number of mentors cited in the December 2025 Staff Delivery Survey (148 participants). Range of number of mentors was 1-123, Median was 25 and Mode was 20.

⁸ Based on groups of 3 mentors delivering a minimum of 4 sessions to classes of 30 pupils.

⁹ Number of pupils reached= number of mentors + number of children taught by mentors + number of children taught MVP lessons by staff

Development of Materials

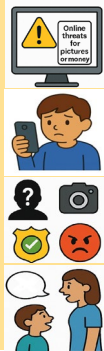
Additional materials have been created and are now available to support a range of young people with Additional Support Needs (ASN) so that they can access the MVP programme.

Four new scenarios are now available in an adapted format:

- Words (explores homophobia and its impact),
- Pressure and Photos (explore the sharing of intimate images, the pressures that can lead to coercion and the impacts of image-based abuse)
- Sextortion (explores sexual extortion, warning signs and how to respond).

Learning Intentions

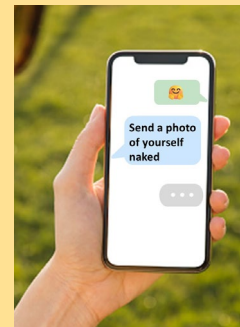
- To understand what sextortion is.
- To know when sextortion is happening.
- To know what methods are used by blackmailers.
- To know what to do if it happens to you or a friend.



Sharing of images

Hands up – who knows what 'sharing of images' means?

Hands up- Do you know anyone this has happened to?



Hands Up

Put your hand up if you think there is something wrong with what is happening.



Photos

You're with a group of friends. One boy has photos of his ex-girlfriend on his phone.



Existing ASN scenarios cover Gender Box, Bystanders, Corridor and Messages. A new scenario was also created on Sextortion for mainstream settings in partnership with Police Scotland and [Fearless](#). This is already making a difference.

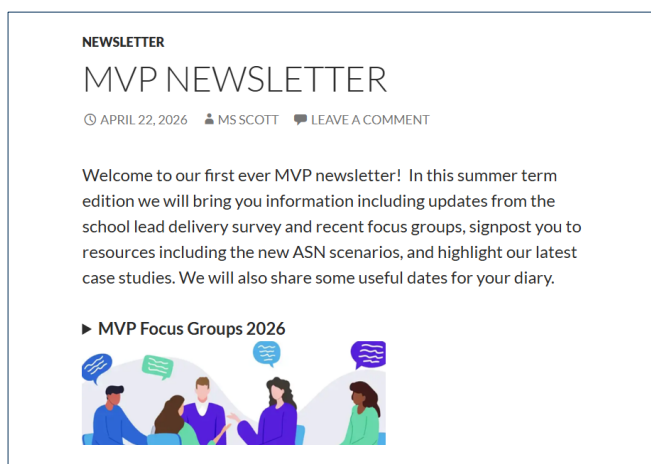
'A parent came into school to tell me that their young person had shared with them that they were being blackmailed. The young person said that they knew they had to tell someone after I had delivered the sextortion scenario in PSE'

Pastoral Care teacher, Stirling

New ways to stay in touch

Newsletter

A termly newsletter has been launched! Sign up [here](#), use this QR code or read it on the [MVP website](#).



LinkedIn

MVP is leaving the social media platform X and has launched a presence on LinkedIn.



MVP continues to have a Microsoft Teams page for those who have received MVP training. The [MVP website](#) hosts resources, updates and quality assurance guides.

Impact on young people and school culture

In March 2026, Development Officers from the MVP national team at Education Scotland, visited six schools and one community group to hear from young people and staff involved in MVP. Forty-two mentees, 40 mentors and 15 staff participated in the focus groups. The settings were situated in North Lanarkshire Council, City of Edinburgh Council, East Lothian Council, Dundee City Council, South Lanarkshire Council and Stirling Council.

We asked about the impact of MVP, suggested changes, as well as highlights and challenges of the programme. You can read the full report [here](#).

Views of Young People

Mentors (older pupils delivering sessions) described the following impacts:

- Mentors said MVP had a strong personal impact, especially in building their confidence, communication skills and ability to work as part of a team.
- Following delivery of the programme many felt more comfortable speaking in front of others and stepping outside their comfort zone.
- They gained a sense of achievement supporting younger pupils.
- They reported greater awareness of unhealthy behaviours, relationship red flags, and active bystander roles, which they now apply at school and in daily life.
- They valued the transferable skills gained, such as teamwork, safeguarding awareness and public speaking.
- They found it rewarding to see younger pupils engaging in sessions and seeking support, reinforcing MVP's positive impact on the school community.

When asked for examples of when they had been an active bystander the following themes emerged:

- Mentors described stepping in confidently as active bystanders, including calming situations, supporting pupils who were being targeted and intervening before incidents escalated.
- Some shared examples of breaking up fights, helping distressed pupils or reporting intimidating behaviour, while others chose indirect actions like checking in afterwards or telling a trusted adult.
- Many said that before MVP they would have ignored these situations, but the training helped them recognise their options and feel confident in acting responsibly and safely.

'There were two juniors and one of them was name-calling this lassie. I stepped in and stopped it. I said to the lassie if it happens again come to me and I've not heard anything since. Without my MVP training I would have walked by, it wouldn't have been my bother.' Male mentor

Mentors in the community setting observed:

- a deeper understanding of gender-based violence, stereotypes and the bystander effect, often re-evaluating behaviours they had previously seen as “normal.”
- increased confidence in challenging harmful comments, stepping in when unsafe situations begin to develop and refusing to laugh along.
- they valued the less formal nature of youth settings, where discussions felt more open, reflective and respectful than in school.

Younger pupils (mentees) were given tasks to investigate their understanding of core concepts. They recognised violence as more than physical harm and included aspects of violence such as verbal aggression, verbal and emotional abuse, online threats and coercion.

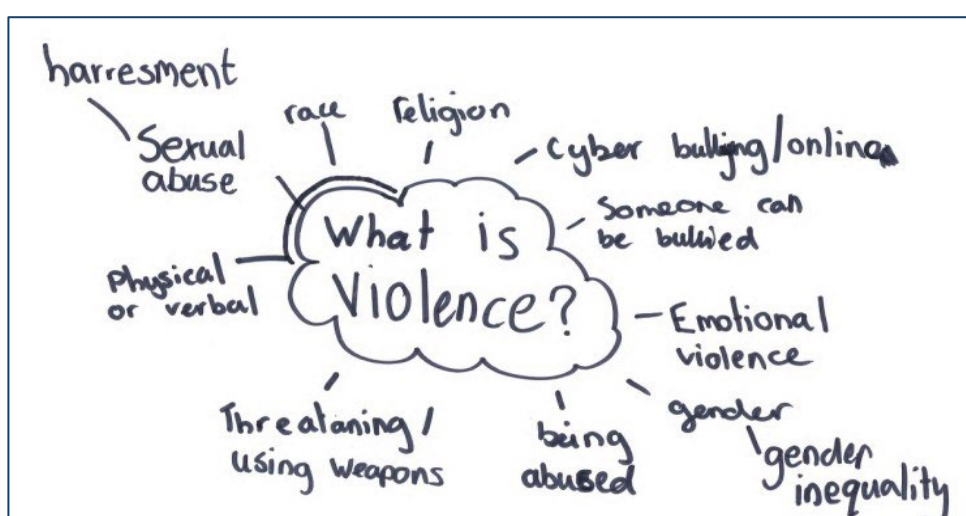


Figure 3 Mind map drawn by younger pupils during a focus group

When younger pupils were asked if they had been a bystander recently they readily identified these times but reported that they often felt too scared or unsure to take action. Some did speak about taking action including reporting fights, alerting teachers and challenging bullying in group chats.

The following analysis explains how the impact of MVP aligns with the different stages of bystander theory¹⁰:

Stage 1: Notice something is happening

Mentees demonstrated a clear awareness of when something harmful was happening around them. They described bystanders as people who see, hear or are aware of something harmful and shared a wide range of real examples including bullying, threats, discriminatory behaviour and physical incidents. Many felt that MVP increased their awareness of what is happening both in school and in the wider world.

¹⁰ Latané, B., & Darley, J. M. (1970). The unresponsive bystander: Why doesn't he help? New York, NY: Appleton-Century-Croft.

Stage 2: Recognise that something is wrong

Mentees showed a strong and developing understanding of harmful behaviour. They were able to identify different forms of violence, including verbal, emotional, discriminatory and online abuse, as well as gender-based violence such as sexism and harassment. However, some uncertainty remained, particularly when behaviour could be interpreted as banter or when they were unsure of the context.

Stage 3: Decide that you have a personal responsibility to intervene

Bystander theory identifies fear and uncertainty as key reasons that people don't act. Mentees recognised that not acting can allow harmful behaviour to continue, but many described barriers that prevent them from taking responsibility. These included fear of getting involved, of becoming a target themselves, not knowing the people involved, or being labelled 'a grass.' Some pupils described choosing not to intervene even when they knew something was wrong, highlighting this as a key challenge.

Stage 4: Have the skills and confidence to act

Mentees were able to identify a range of safe and appropriate strategies for intervention, including telling someone to stop, reporting to a trusted adult, checking in with the person affected, or seeking support from others. Many reported that MVP increased their confidence and helped them feel more prepared to respond. However, they also acknowledged that confidence varied and that they were more likely to act when they felt safe or supported by others.

Views of staff

Staff observed positive changes in pupils' confidence, behaviour and language, alongside increased willingness to report concerns and challenge harmful attitudes. Barriers to pupils intervening were still apparent.

Staff highlighted the strength of the peer-led, whole-school approach, particularly when experienced mentors helped train new cohorts and staff from different subject areas shared responsibility.

MVP Annual School Lead Survey of Impact May 2026



There were 67 responses to this staff survey from 24 Local Authorities.

Examples of impact :

- 'Immediately after mentor training days, a group of mentors came to me to report physical abuse between two people in a relationship in the school. This was then able to be dealt with appropriately by school staff.' *Dundee City*
- 'Mentors have approached the Support team to inform that they have intervened when witnessing inappropriate language (degrading etc.), this was then followed up by pastoral staff.' *Argyll and Bute*

- 'Our S6 cohort carry themselves with a level of respect and kindness that MVP has directly impacted.' *Renfrewshire*

'We have had several situations where pupils have stepped forward and shared something they felt was wrong. We had a particularly public incident that took place outside in the community after school hours, which was shared on social media in an attempt to make it look like a racial incident. A pupil had emailed me that night to let me know and we were able to quickly address it the following day. We were extremely worried that this would create division within the school but mentors went round all classes that morning, sharing a statement about how much they loved the diversity within the school and that this does not reflect our school values. They also gave up their free time at break and lunch to help supervise and offer a listening ear to any younger pupils who may have been affected by it.' *Glasgow City*

- 'The language the young people are using has changed.' *East Ayrshire*
- 'Mentors have shared with me that in their own lives, they have been able to identify unhealthy relationships and even advise friends what to do and how to seek help.' *Clackmannanshire*
- 'Mentors have been able to identify coercive behaviour within relationships, including friendships, and take steps to manage this or end the relationship.' *East Ayrshire*
- 'One pupil in particular has become more respectful towards female teachers.' *Edinburgh City*
- 'Young boy whose mother was a victim previously of domestic violence. The programme has given him a chance to have a healthy outlet to process this.' *North Ayrshire*
- 'We had a disclosure of signs of an abusive relationship to an S6 mentor by an S3 student that would likely have gone unmentioned to a mentor of staff. This resulted in support for the young person involved and discussions with the other party about respect and healthy relationships.' *East Lothian*
- 'A mentor has stopped an act of physical violence by safely telling the appropriate person at a community youth hub.' *Inverclyde*
- 'A mentor has come to me concerned about a pupil who she suspected was being bullied. Previously she said she would not have interfered but now felt that she had to.' *Angus*
- 'Reporting nasty comments relating to another pupil's race, cultural norms for females.' *Argyll and Bute*



Impact: Case Studies

Two case studies have been published this session.

1. MVP: An effective school and youth work partnership



Smithycroft Mentors discussing MVP and the partnership with St Paul's Youth Forum

This case study explores the partnership between Smithycroft Secondary School and St Paul's Youth Forum (SPYF) to deliver the Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP) programme. The collaboration combines classroom learning with community youth work to address issues such as consent, pornography, and harmful gender norms. SPYF staff co-facilitated MVP sessions in school and in the youth group, creating informal, trusted spaces for open discussion and empowering students as active bystanders and leaders. This case study highlights the positive impact of this integrated approach in reinforcing prevention messages across school and community.

2. Engaging boys and men in the MVP programme



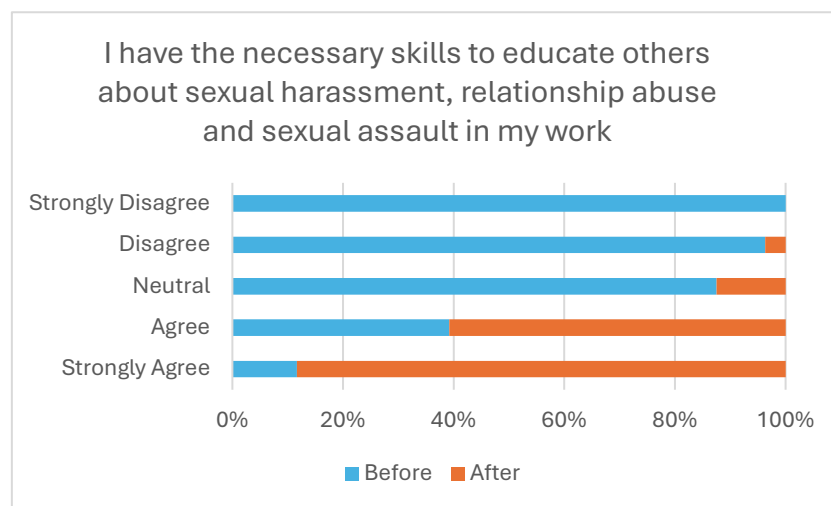
Football team MVP Mentors from Park Mains High School

By harnessing the influence of senior S5/S6 males from the school's football team, Park Mains has helped shift aspects of school culture, develop positive male role models and strengthen friendships and soft skills. Staff delivered 2 days of training to senior students – including members of the boys' football team – preparing them to become peer mentors.

This case study highlights the positive impact of the MVP programme on these young male mentors, the younger pupils they worked with, and the wider school ethos.

Impact: Staff Professional Learning

MVP data over several years has demonstrated a significant improvement in participants' belief that they have the necessary skills to educate others about gender-based violence. This year continues this finding with a shift from 36% to 98% in those who agree or strongly agree with the following statement before and after the MVP professional learning: 'I have the necessary skills to educate others about sexual harassment, relationship abuse and sexual assault in my work'. There was a drop in participants who filled out the survey afterwards (414 before and 312 after) that needs to be noted. Many participants noted in their feedback the usefulness of discussions and practising the scenarios, suggesting these are key ingredients in equipping staff to build their confidence in tackling the topic of gender-based violence.



Graph 1 Ratings of statement by participants before and after MVP professional learning

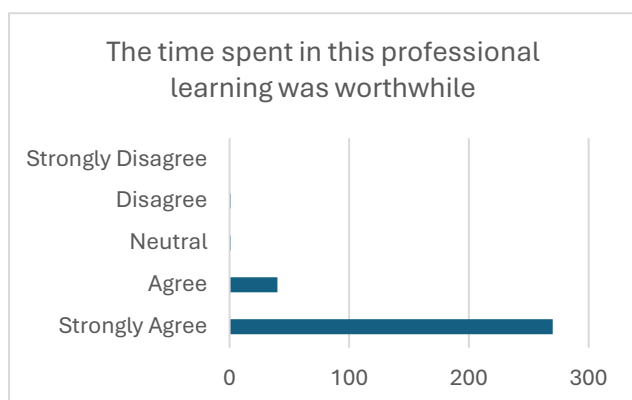
The readiness of staff to take on teaching about gender-based violence is vital when embedding MVP, as leadership is key. The staff receiving the professional learning was comprised mainly of teachers but included Community Learning & Development, Police Scotland and other partners.

Examples of feedback on what was useful in the professional learning:

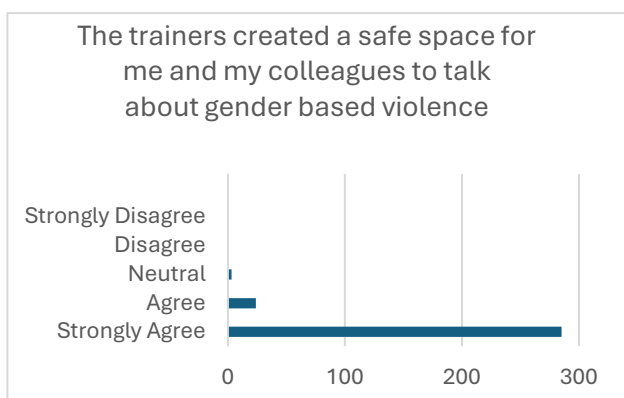
- 'I honestly wish every CLPL experience was like this; engaging, thought-provoking, practical, and genuinely enjoyable... It feels like such a meaningful and worthwhile opportunity to make a difference.'
- 'Learning strategies to diffuse or address situations. More aware of my acceptance/silent endorsement of some behaviours.'
- 'The discussion around challenging different viewpoints and discussions.'
- 'Not to shame bystanders, but look at the many ways that interventions could happen which could have a huge impact.'

The graphs below summarise responses from the post-training survey to a number of statements related to the professional learning (312 responses):

Participants overwhelmingly found the professional learning worthwhile and felt that the trainers created a safe space in which they could talk about gender-based violence.



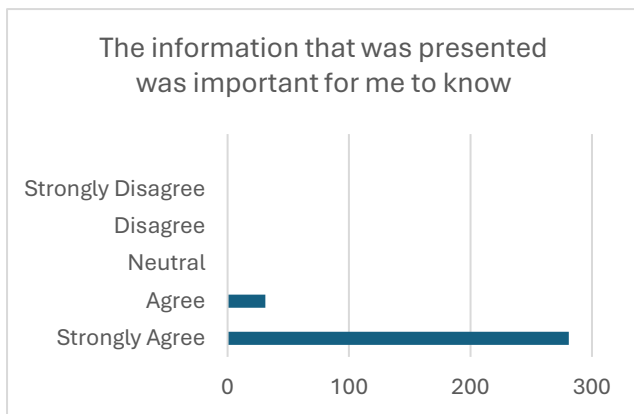
Graph 2 Ratings of statement 'The time spent in this professional learning was worthwhile' by participants after the MVP professional learning



Graph 3 Ratings of statement 'The trainers created a safe space for me and my colleagues to talk about gender based violence' by participants after the MVP professional learning

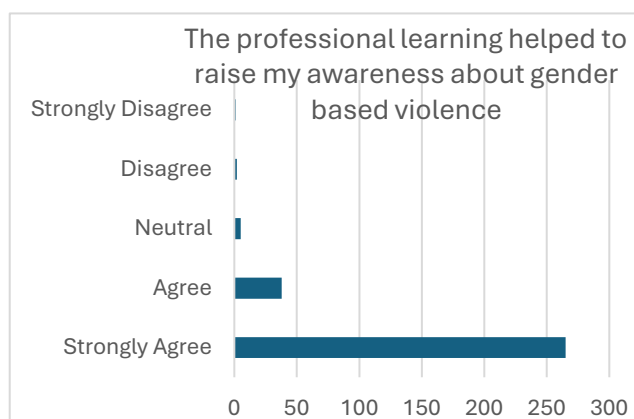
Participants felt that the information presented was important. One participant reflected,

'What really struck me is just how important and relevant this work is for young people and schools, especially given the climate we're living in with smartphones, gender-based violence, increasing domestic abuse, and the wider challenges young people are facing socially and emotionally. It feels like such a meaningful and worthwhile opportunity to make a difference.'



Graph 4 Ratings of statement 'The information that was presented was important for me to know' by participants after the MVP professional learning

The professional learning raised awareness of gender-based violence in most participants but, given that some expert partners attended this training, it is to be expected that it would not raise their awareness. However, expert partners were able to learn about the programme and contribute richly to the discussions taking place.



Graph 5 Ratings of statement 'The professional learning helped to raise my awareness about gender based violence' by participants after the MVP professional learning

Gender-Based Violence: Early Intervention

Last session, materials for professional learning were piloted using a Train the Trainer model (TTT) following requests for support from primary schools and the clear statistics illustrating how even young children can be harmed by gender-based violence.

In 2025-2026, a further TTT day built on the work of the two TTT days delivered at the start of 2025. The Gender-Based Violence Early Intervention project has now trained leads in 14 Local Authorities. Three of these Local Authorities have begun to roll out this professional learning to primary and early years leaders in their own area. Feedback from one of these Local Authorities led to further amendments to the core materials. Capacity issues are a significant barrier: both to reach the volume of staff who could be involved and for staff leads to create a space for this on their School Improvement Plan.



Materials now encompass the key elements of MVP training: exploring violence through a gendered lens, the scope of violence and victim blaming. Additionally staff explore ways that schools have incorporated gender equality work and the bystander approach into their curriculum. Staff are encouraged to plan steps towards change in their own establishments.

Sharing Practice

- [Sharing practice \(collated\) October 2022](#)
- Woodlands FNC
- Dalry PS
- Torphichen PS
- Pumpherstoun & Uphall PS

Look at examples & consider how this might work in your setting.

Embedding prevention work into the curriculum

RSHP	Body autonomy, consent and protection from harm
Home - RSHP	Emotional wellbeing and help-seeking behaviour
	Gender Equality, Discrimination and Gender-based violence
	Relationships and Friendships

Learning for sustainability. Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

5 GENDER EQUALITY

Health and wellbeing: Experiences and outcomes [education.gov.scot](#)

Moving forward, school leads will have the opportunity to join an Education Scotland programme covering these materials while Local Authority leads can continue to roll out in their own authority.

Conclusion

Most Local Authority secondary schools in Scotland have had staff trained to deliver MVP. However, teams can quickly become depleted through staff moves and changes of remits. The current task, therefore, is to support schools that need to build capacity in their team and to help those who want to reintroduce MVP to their school. This has been accomplished this year and a record number of schools are delivering MVP. This requires dedication and leadership from school staff in what is a demanding context. It is a testimony to both the impact of the programme and the passion of staff that this progress has been achieved.

Impact evidence gathered through surveys, focus groups and case studies clearly demonstrates that MVP is playing an important role in raising awareness of gender-based violence and how to prevent it and is encouraging young people to be active bystanders when they witness harm.

Partnership working has always been valued in the MVP programme. This year, the impact of partners to harness the potential of youth education settings such as youth clubs and football teams highlights the impact that can be made when young people explore gender-based violence in settings other than school. This will be built on in the new academic year with training specifically aimed at Community Learning and Development (CLD) and third sector partners working in youth education settings.

There has been an increase in materials made available for young people with additional support needs. Best practice in ASN settings will be explored going forward and further professional learning will be offered for practitioners.

Quality assurance processes have been strengthened through Quality Assurance Guides but these still need to be highlighted to more staff. A stronger communications strategy will support this aim.

The professional learning related to Gender-based Violence Early Intervention will be made available going forward as an Education Scotland online programme to support capacity and demand.

**Thank-you
to all the MVP team: the young people,
staff and partners who work together
to make Scotland a better and safer
place for all.**