

Evaluation of 'In The Zone' School Programme, Wirral

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 BACKGROUND	1
1.2 PROGRAMME DELIVERY	1
2. METHODOLOGY	3
2.1 RECRUITMENT & INTERVIEWS	3
2.2 ETHICS	3
2.3 DATA ANALYSES	4
3. FINDINGS	5
3.1 STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS	5
3.1.1 <i>Background to the intervention</i>	5
3.1.2 <i>Programme delivery</i>	6
3.1.3 <i>Success and impact</i>	7
3.1.4 <i>Areas for development</i>	9
3.1.5 <i>Programme sustainability</i>	10
4. SECONDARY DATA ANALYSIS	12
4.1 IN THE ZONE EVALUATION FORMS	12
4.2 SELF-REPORTED LEARNING OUTCOMES	12
4.2.1 <i>Exploitation</i>	13
4.2.2 <i>Knife Crime and Associated Behaviours</i>	14
4.2.3 <i>Drug and Alcohol Awareness</i>	15
5. SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS	16
5.1 IMPLEMENTATION AND DELIVERY OF THE PROGRAMME	16
5.2 IMPACT OF IN THE ZONE	17
5.3 CONCLUSION	17
6. REFERENCES	18
7. APPENDICES	19
7.1 APPENDIX 1 OUTCOME STAR 2023	19
7.2 APPENDIX 2 PAST 'IN THE ZONE' INFORMATION SHEET WITH SIX ZONES	21

1. Introduction

Merseyside is one of the 18 areas allocated funding since 2019 by the UK Government to establish a Violence Reduction Unit. To inform the continued development of the Merseyside Violence Reduction Partnership (MVRP) in November 2019 (Quigg et al., 2020), July 2020 (Quigg et al., 2021) and June 2021, the Merseyside Academics' Violence Prevention Partnership (MAVPP) were commissioned to evaluate the MVRP as a whole. Additionally, selected work programmes from each of the five Burroughs were chosen to be evaluated. This report forms one of a suite of outputs from the 2022/2023 evaluation work programme, and specifically presents an evaluation of the In the Zone Schools Programme, Wirral.

1.1 Background

Violence not only affects the individual(s) involved, but also families, the community, and wider society. This places significant burdens on public services including health, social services, criminal justice, and other sectors (WHO, 2014). There is growing evidence of the advantages of adopting a public health approach to violence prevention both across the UK and internationally. A public health approach aims to promote population level health and wellbeing by addressing underlying risk factors that increase the likelihood of violence. This approach also promotes protective factors for violence across individual, community, relationship, and societal levels (Krug et al., 2002). Knife attacks, firearms, robberies, and drug disputes are the primary categories of violence in Merseyside. Merseyside police recorded over 48,000 incidents of violence against an individual 2019/20. Furthermore, almost 15,000 of these were reported as violence resulting with an injury. Considering this and the significant costs of violence there is a valid argument for investing in violence prevention in Merseyside (Jones et al., 2021).

In 2021, Wirral Youth Justice Service (YJS) developed the intervention 'In the Zone' from a Serious Youth Violence prevention aspect (Wirral Youth Justice Service, 2022). It was launched as part of Wirral Youth Justice Strategic Plan 2021-2022 to prevent and tackle violent crime (Wirral Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee, 2023). The prevalence of knife crime was one of the drivers for In the Zone which targets prevention messages on knife crime and associated behaviours. Specifically, In the Zone delivers information to young people about subjects that may affect them today, including, knife crime, exploitation, gangs, violence, peer pressure, drugs and alcohol, anti-social behaviour, and keeping safe on the internet. The intervention provides CYP with tools to ensure they gain knowledge and skills to keep them safe in the community.

1.2 Programme Delivery

The bespoke carousel-style programme is aimed at year 9 pupils in mainstream secondary schools and alternative provision schools in Wirral. The programme was initially delivered in six zones (now five) to a year 9 group over one day in schools, run by the Local Authority and Merseyside Police. Each Zone has a theme whereby each pupil (groups of approximately 20 per zone) is involved in a game or activity for 45 minutes. It is anticipated that short, intense, and fun sessions are more productive than assemblies or power point presentations. The

'zone' interventions are focused on risks outside the home in line with the contextual safeguarding agenda. The zones are outlined below in Box 1 and represent those in the 2023 programme. Changes over time based on feedback from students, teachers, and stakeholders meant the original six zones were further developed and changed based on the needs of the pupils at different times, making the zones timely and significant. See appendix 2 for the original In the Zone information sheet and six zones.

Box 1 – Zones (2023)

1. Crime and Consequences

- Engaging young people through interactive and informal educative board game/presentation
- To raise young people's awareness about the impact of offending and rise in violent and knife crime amongst young people both Locally and Nationally
- Facilitated by the Youth Justice Service

2. Going Country

- Looks at issues around criminal exploitation and county lines
- How to keep safe in the community
- Focus on topics such as grooming, drug dealing, violence, robberies
- Facilitated by The Compass Team (Wirral's Child Exploitation Team)

3. HAC Man

- Interactive educational game
- To raise awareness around cybercrime, online safety, cyber bullying, digital footprint, sending indecent images, and other cyber related crimes/offences
- Up to date knowledge on the use of social media, the law, and keeping safe.
- Facilitated by Merseyside police

4. Think * Feel * Do: Peer Pressure & Substance Misuse

- Explores young people's understanding on a range of social scenarios they may find themselves in
- Peer pressure
- Substance misuse
- Facilitated by Youth Matters

5. Walk in the Park

- Interactive Q&A session, using activities, real life scenario's and informal learning
- To educate and advise young people in relation to Alcohol and Drugs
- Encourage space for safe conversations
- Give harm reduction messages to help students make informed choices
- Reduce risk.
- Facilitated by Response

To date the intervention has reached over 4,000 young people in Wirral schools, with positive feedback from both academic establishments and CYP *"this year we've reached 4000 kids and there or thereabouts we've hit every secondary school bar two in the Wirral which is a lot of kids and then next year we've got all secondary schools. So every single year 9 pupil will do and in the zone day."* The continued development of In the Zone is worthy of real recognition.

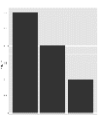
2. Methodology

To meet study objectives, a range of methods were implemented with findings triangulated to inform the evaluation outcomes and recommendations.

Evaluation activities included:



A review of literature and information about In the Zone School Programme to provide context to the research and aide the interpretation of research findings and development of recommendations.



Quantitative and qualitative analysis of available anonymous secondary data from In the Zone: Evaluation Forms $n=300$



Interviews ($n=5$) with key stakeholders involved in the delivery of the programme and integrated support for In the Zone

Review of programme documents and data: We collated existing documentation in the form of evaluation sheets, which provide detail on the reach and impacts of the programme. All information collected was anonymised.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with programme developers and co-ordinators who deliver different aspects of the programme. Interviews were conducted via MS Teams and explored perceptions of the programme and curriculum content; programme development and delivery, including any adaptations; factors supporting and impeding implementation of, and engagement in the programme; areas for development; and perceived and actual impacts.

2.1 Recruitment & Interviews

The gatekeeper was responsible for providing permission for the research to be carried out and facilitated engagement with the co-ordinators/programme leaders of the Zones. The gatekeeper was contacted via email informing them of the study and consent was obtained to proceed. Co-ordinators/programme leaders were then recruited to the study directly via an email from the gatekeeper. All participants were provided with a participant information sheet, which outlined the purpose of the interview and what it would entail, information about confidentiality, and how the data they provide would be used. Participants were then asked to sign a consent form and/or provide verbal consent, and with their permission, the interview could be audio recorded using a Dictaphone and subsequently transcribed verbatim. Interviews lasted around 30 to 45 minutes. Participants were not offered any incentive to participate.

2.2 Ethics

Ethical approval was sought and approved by Liverpool John Moores University (UREC ref no 23/PHI/003).

2.3 Data analyses

Interview data were transcribed verbatim and were imported into NVivo as well as the open-text responses on the evaluation form. Here they were coded and subsequently thematically analysed. Likert scale questions on the evaluation forms were imported into SPSS and subsequently analysed. The findings of both qualitative and quantitative analyses were triangulated with collated literature to provide robust findings and recommendations.

3. Findings¹

3.1 Stakeholder Interviews

Five stakeholders involved in the development, implementation, and delivery of In the Zone, were interviewed in July 2023. Discussions centred on the background, justification, and implementation of the intervention, challenges with implementation and delivery, outcomes and impact, areas for development, and sustainability of the programme.

3.1.1 Background to the intervention

The quotes below show that the inception and background to the programme stemmed from stakeholders experience of a similar programme in Wirral which unfortunately stopped running. The observed positive impacts of that programme were a catalyst for the development of In the Zone in addition to increased evidence of risks outside the home for CYP in Wirral. Stakeholders discussed how numerous agencies met and came up with ideas of what information they felt would be beneficial for young people. For example, the police were looking at ideas on how to engage young people on the dangers of gangs and exploitation. The VRP provided £500 funding for each agency and with that, they could design the interactive board games that would be used at each zone to play with the kids to get them engaged.

“In the zone was developed on the same concept as a programme that was delivered by the Brook on Wirral called carousel event, this no longer runs due to changes in delivery. We thought the original idea was a really positive way to engage with young people. We wanted to address risks outside the home, focusing on themes such as, knives, county lines, drugs and alcohol. We felt that Young people think they know the risks associated with these issues from friends and social media, given the nature of our roles we felt that we could give them the correct information so that they could make more informed choices” (S3)

Of consideration when developing the program was the appropriate age-group to target. Stakeholders noted that year 9 was deemed the most appropriate due to CYP becoming more sociable and outgoing at that stage of their lives.

“ Year nine, research shows, young people start to socialise more with friends in the community. So if you can engage them at year nine, and give them skills to identify risks in the community and outside the home, we felt this was the most appropriate age to keep themselves safe and understand the risk in the community” (S3)

In contrast, one stakeholder felt that due to increased incidences of peer pressure and coercion of those younger pupils in year 7, the programme should be developed and delivered to younger age groups.

“I would also like to think that we should do ... a lightened version of what we do in secondary in year six in primary but that's just my opinion ... not as comprehensive as we do in the secondary schools but I do think we need to target our year sixes coming into

¹ Quote key: S=Stakeholders

year seven because we're seeing on the ground our younger age group being coerced by their older peers" (S1)

3.1.2 Programme delivery

The 'zone' interventions are focused on risks outside the home in line with the contextual safeguarding agenda. The *"multi-faceted approach"* to delivery is well-received by all involved and in particular, feedback from the CYP is extremely positive. The interactive style of delivery was chosen as the best approach to keep the pupils engaged which would result in them taking away the learning and the messages being delivered about violence prevention. Whilst most zones use an interactive board game however, one stakeholder reported preferring to deliver a conversational-style session, highlighting the flexibility and adaptability of the programme for each agency involved.

"So we ran it in school classrooms, so the kids moved around. They stuck to their timetable of lessons, but instead of going to English and math that they do a lesson on county lines. But what we didn't want it to be is boring because they would switch off in PowerPoint by slide two. We wanted to make it interactive, we come up with these ideas of board games. And they're all based on like monopoly, snakes, and ladders" (S3)

"We normally have five zones running through the day and they do an hour with each zone. So they would get an hour with us, gangs and ladders, which is our game. They would do an hour with the anti-social behaviour team on their game, and they rotate around the five during the day just to get that little bit of information from each agency" (S4)

"Most of the zones are run on a game sort of system, whereas mine isn't. Mine is me. The most effective way to get that information out to young people is to have open, informal conversations as a group setting" (S5)

There were a number of supporting factors in the implementation and delivery of In the Zone which encompassed VRP funding, existing contacts within schools by the partners involved, word of mouth within the academic / teaching arena, buy-in from schools, and co-operation and engagement with teachers of year 9 pupils. For example, school police officers who were already based in schools, were able to give the co-ordinator the correct contact details and links to each school as they knew who the best person to speak to was. Sometimes emails to school officers can get lost, and by giving direct contact information avoided this and increased the reach of In the Zone.

"We were kind of giving them more direct contact and we've been able to say right, this is what's on offer for this year" (S4)

Implementation and delivery of In the Zone were not without barriers and challenges. Stakeholders discussed initially how schools were reluctant to take it on board due to misinterpretation of what the programme comprised of. Some suggested that staff in schools thought the programme may be targeting their students specifically due to an assumption that they may be involved in anti-social behaviour which caused an initial negative barrier to buy-in as it may show their school in a negative light. Once the programme was explained as

a preventative intervention and that it was going to be offered to all school this broke that barrier down.

“I know all schools are on board now, but some schools have been very reluctant to allow us to go in” (S1)

Other challenges in the delivery of the programme pertained to specifics on the day In the Zone is running. First, stakeholders noted that some school/teachers did not want to give up a day of lessons to accommodate In the Zone which usually takes up a full day of their usual lessons. Furthermore, issues around schools assisting the organisation on the day were minimal but reported by some. The final barrier was mostly due to staffing levels for the agencies involved in running the zones. It was reported by all that working on an In the Zone day was an extra *“add-on”* to their normal workload meaning it wasn’t always feasible for people to participate.

“I think some schools are more reluctant to drop them off timetable for the day because it is a full day. So if some are reluctant to drop them off the timetable for that day and others just kind of factor into the drop down days they already have and will do it as part of their PSHE” (S4)

“It’s just the staffing levels for everybody, because we’re all working at capacity and then this is adding another 26 days a year that we’ve got our allocate just for in the zone. So for us as schools officers, that’s our role. That’s what we do.” (S4)

3.1.3 Success and impact

Measuring programme success was discussed with all stakeholders and included observed impact, feedback from children and young people who have completed the programme, and feedback from schools. The voices of children and young people were considered by all as essential for measuring the impact and success of the programme, and to address any issues or preferences for the future of the programme. Evaluation forms provided to pupils at the end of the day were considered by most as being effective tools to measure success however, one stakeholder noted the clear need to improve the evaluation tool and be quantitatively advantageous.

“I think they’re positive. I think everything’s always up for change because one size does not fit all. And I think it’s part of our monitoring and evaluation as well of our practice. So when we look at the evaluations, we see where things are and we listen and we read what young people say and we listen to what the young people are saying, and we make those changes and adapt our sessions accordingly, because what we might think is working, young people’s interpretation and staff interpretation the see it differently so we are a very flexible service where we can adapt and change our style and if it’s, you know if they want more of one and less of another then that’s the way we go. We are very, very much young person led” (S1)

“One of the things that came out last year on last year’s one, we definitely, they were asking for things around drug and alcohol. It’s obviously a thing, isn’t it? So that’s why this year we’ve added in drug and alcohol and we’ve got rid of the ASB elements

because the service lost staff long term sickness so they couldn't do it. So we fitted it in with drug and alcohol, which is what the kids were asking" (S3)

"I'm no expert in evaluation, but I feel like it probably could be doing it better. I think we ask a question like how much you know out of 10 and then how much you know after out of 10, but mostly young people you know, you have to say to them, well what is a 5 to you? Because five to me and five to you is so different. So I was thinking we could word it 'a little bit', 'a lot', 'nothing'. Rather than make it a numerical value really" (S5)

The anticipated impact of the programme varied between stakeholders, likely due to them working on different zones than others. However, the overall consensus was that not only would the programme impact the children and young people, but the wider community as well. Success was considered by one as reducing the incidences of CYP carrying a knife, even just one was considered a successful outcome. Building on that, others were very focused on ensuring that CYP had the knowledge and awareness of how to react in the case of a violent incident such as someone having been stabbed and how to respond specifically to that situation.

"That one kid didn't carry a knife. As long as I stop one kid or one kid knows that if they are involved in a knife incident, they know what to do because there's first aid involved in our zone. And if one kid understands and recognizes that their mate is being exploited for county lines, that's it in a nutshell, it's just to educate" (S3)

Involvement in gangs, county lines, and the possibility for CYP to be exploited in these scenarios was also widely discussed. One stakeholder discussed the lack of awareness by CYP that they are involved in such situations and that by providing this information to them at In the Zone would allow them to be more aware of their surroundings and the people they are with. Furthermore, it was believed by S1 that the programme also demonstrates to the wider community that action is being taken to help prevent or reduce the possibility for CYP to engage in violence and associated behaviours.

"A lot of them don't realise that what they're doing is actually like they are being exploited, or they don't know that it is a criminal offence, or they can't see if that it's actually like they're being drawn into a gang and being exploited. So just giving them that little bit more information really for them to work with" (S4)

"It's about making sure our wider community know that we are fully involved with, fully engaged, and we're fully understanding of the pressures of what's going on and we're doing our best with the resources that we've got we utilize them to the best of our ability and how we see is the best impact on the on a wide scale" (S1)

Outcomes and impact observed by those involved in the co-ordination and running of the programme were discussed. Stakeholders provided information on each of the specific zone they work on. It was noted by two stakeholders that they witnessed some pupils who had completed In the Zone at school, attending youth clubs and services within their community, having been told about them at In the Zone. This was considered a significant successful outcome as it created a positive link and familiarity between youth workers in the community

and children and young people who attend those clubs/services. The large number of pupils who would be reached in one session/day was also believed by stakeholders to be a measure of success of the programme.

“We noticed some of our young people that we'd seen in school in the In the Zone ... so they already knew us, so that was good we knew them but you let them make the first approach and that was fine and they did and the link was “you were in our school last week” and that opens a conversation and in that perspective New Ferry has seen a massive increase in the engagement of young people, both on the “Contactabus”, which is the detach teams resource” (S1)

“It's a really positive project. Obviously, we are all about prevention, for us it's kinda the one event we know we run every year and get a load of messages out to one year group in a very short space of time. We're hitting like 160/180 kids with those messages, they're very clear message. But, because they're engaging, because it's the game, its stuff they are gonna take away” (S4)

A disclosure by a pupil who had said they purchased a knife, to the In the Zone team, resulted in the teachers/academic staff implementing their safeguarding procedures thus reducing the number of knives being use by pupils at the school by one. This was considered a huge success and evidence of the trust and respect the children and young people have for the In the Zone stakeholders.

“When we were talking about the age range to buy a knife, we said, “no you have to be over 18” and he said “well I bought a knife the other day”. We moved on, but then afterwards, the school dealt with it under there safeguarding procedures” (S2)

3.1.4 Areas for development

Whilst the programme was seen in a very positive, successful viewpoint, some stakeholders discussed ideas for further development. One such concept was to link the In the Zone programme outcomes and discussions that occurred during the delivery of the zones, with health services school workers who are already working alongside the schools. It is anticipated that this will provide opportunities for the children and young people to engage with services on a one-to-one basis of which they may not have previously known was available to them.

“I'm going to be looking at building on from the in the zone. I've already done it with two schools where we link in with our health services school workers who are already in those schools and look at some of the issues that have come up from in the zone yeah, that young people have attended the youth club, spoken to one of our youth workers about issues they're facing in school. So we've actually been able to approach that school and gone in and done some one-to-one work. If we hadn't been there and spoken to them, offered them the facility of our youth space, and given our contact cards out we wouldn't have had that contact with that young person” (S1)

Some changes to delivery of the programme were discussed. Some schools run In the Zone with the teachers present, however, that was considered a barrier for the pupils who may not open up or be forthcoming in the group/classroom discussions and that for future In the Zone days, teachers should not stay in the classroom, but be present in the school to assist if safeguarding issues arise.

“Sometimes that works sometimes that doesn't, and sometimes they don't open up, and because the teachers there and they don't want to put themselves out there” (S1)

Another significant recommendation for development was the concept that different zone should shadow each other so that there could be shared ideas for delivery and how each zone could help or improve another.

“We need to shadow, not just deliver our own, shadow other people's workshop so we've got a better understanding of what they're delivering and then once we've all got a good understanding, we all know what we do, we'll have our core practice, we start getting those on the ground of other agencies. So if I do them as well gives us a better understanding of their role and how it complements, or can't compliment, our role and how we can complement theirs” (S1)

Some stakeholders discussed the benefit of developing some information leaflets or workshops for parents of pupils who had completed or would complete In the Zone in the future. This would provide parents with the details of what In the Zone are teaching the pupils as well as relay information to parents who may not be aware of these issues within their community and of their child's involvement or risk for violence.

“Maybe we could run something for the parents alongside. I think a lot of us who do it would agree. It's not pointless doing it to just the kids, but I feel like we need to tell the parents. Because they haven't got a clue, a lot of the parents are so, so far removed and haven't got a clue about what the kids are getting involved in and what's out there and what what's going on” (S4)

3.1.5 Programme sustainability

Sustainability of the programme was primarily focused on continued support and funding that would assist services to be available to deliver the sessions at schools. Currently, many of those involved were providing the sessions as part of their core funded work which, it was noted, would not be feasible long-term. Continued funding and support will likely increase buy in from services who may not have the financial resources to continue to be involved in In the Zone.

“It's long term funding. I think that's really key when you sort of, we're doing this at no extra cost, you know we we're doing this as part of our core delivery that we already get paid for” (S4)

“Is just that buy in from people's time ... as long as you've got the partnership and you've got the buy in from the partners, it will continue” (S3)

Continued collaboration between services and schools to ensure the delivery of the zones are current and relevant to the time at which they are being delivered were deemed necessary for long-term sustainability. Adjustments and tweaks to the programme as necessary were recommended, particularly following examination of the evaluation forms which are completed by the children and young people after the have participated in the programme.

“For me it's about putting faces to names of other workers, staff, that work in those other departments so that when I maybe ring somebody for advice I actually know who

I'm speaking to. So it's about that sharing of information appropriately and it's got to be appropriate, and it is sensitive sometimes. It is about making that judgment call" (S1)

"Police do, they used to do gangs, but we're changing it to cyber this year, cyber safety, grooming and all that sort of stuff because that's a massive thing at the moment. police officers say a lot of their work is something to do with social media, bullying, sexting"

(S3)

4. Secondary data analysis

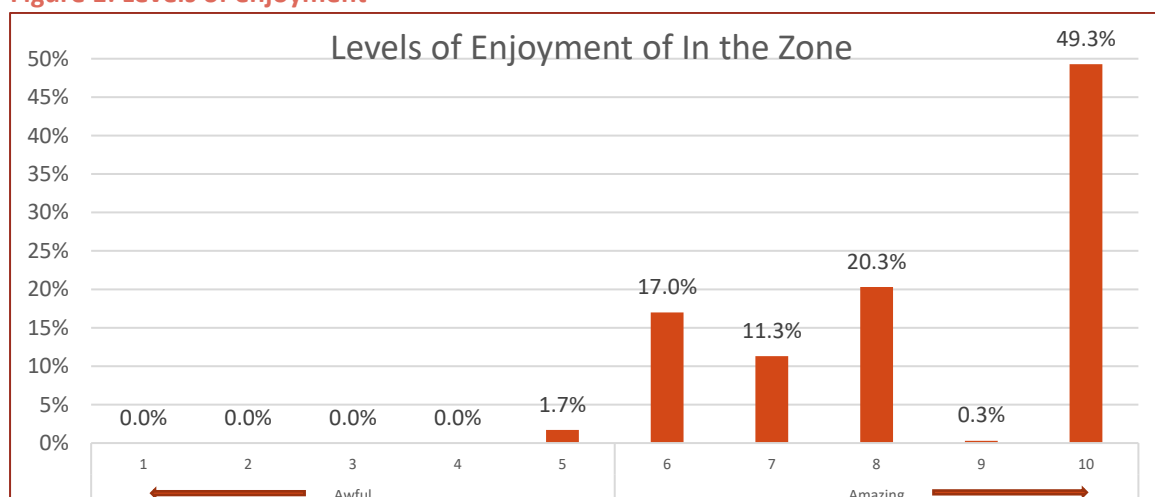
4.1 In the Zone evaluation forms

Young people are provided an evaluation form at the end of an In the Zone day/programme. The form first asks two 'on a scale of 1 to 10' questions: **1**) have you enjoyed your session today? And **2**) have you learnt anything differently or new from what you knew yesterday?

They are then offered three open-text answers to the following: **1**) If you have (learned something new), what have you learnt? **2**) Is there anything you would change in the ones? And **3**) what one thing have you learnt from today? Open text responses were thematically analysed and are presented below as themes with illustrative quotations.

Descriptive analyses of evaluation forms ($n=300$) found that levels of enjoyment at the end of an In the Zone day/programme were mostly 'amazing' (see figure 1) with almost half of the pupils (49.3%) choosing their level of enjoyment as 10.

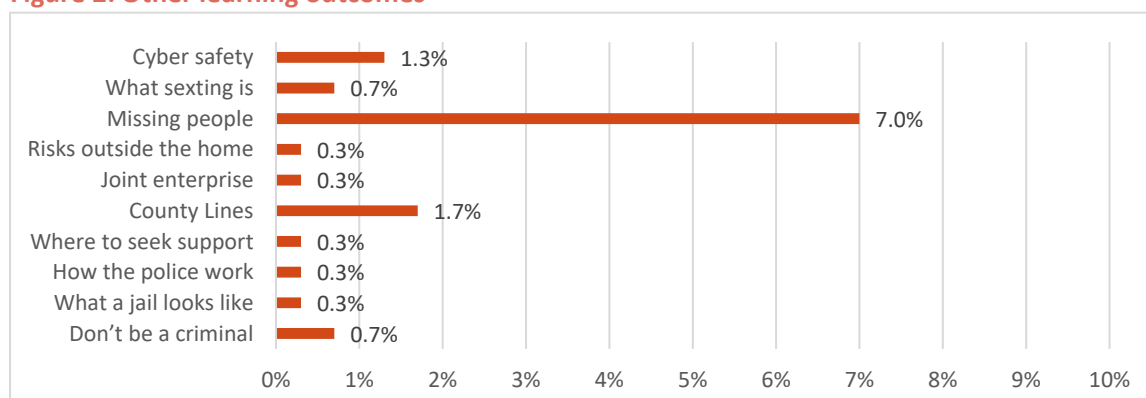
Figure 1: Levels of enjoyment



4.2 Self-Reported Learning Outcomes

Students reported on a number of learning outcomes which are outlined below under the themes: exploitation, knife crime, and drug and alcohol awareness. Other reported new learning, but to a lesser extent are detailed in figure 2.

Figure 2: Other learning outcomes



4.2.1 Exploitation

22% of students reported learning new information about different forms of exploitation. 17% said this was around gangs, peer pressure, and exploitation; 4% sexual exploitation and grooming; and 1% child exploitation. Open text responses where students wrote specific learnings related to each subtheme of exploitation are shown in Box 1. These centred around awareness of peer pressure and grooming by older people, gangs, and drug dealers. Sexual exploitation learnings were mostly regarding sexting or other forms of online interactions and of interest was that they learnt how women can sexually exploit men and that this is not a gender specific harm. Students were interested to learn that exploitation of children can be carried out by those not much older than them.

Box 1: Illustrative quotes for exploitation as a learning outcome





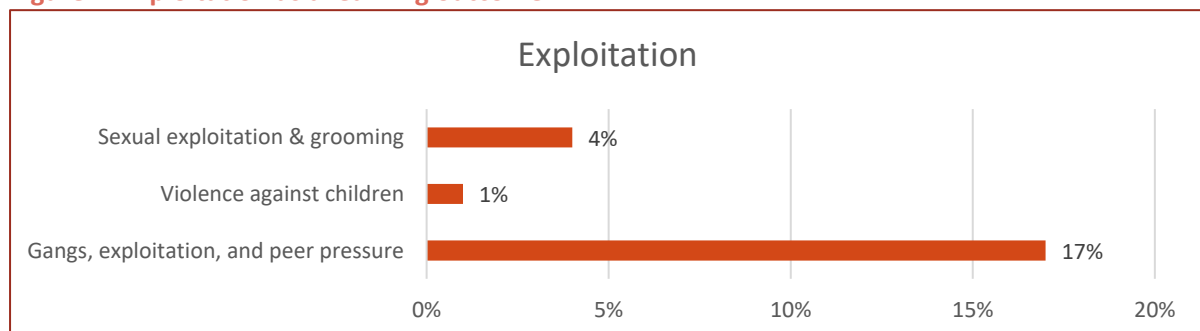
Gangs, peer pressure and exploitation	<p>“drug dealers don’t make you do one thing only, they continually make you do stuff”</p> <p>“don’t trust people you don’t know”</p> <p>“a gift can be a debt”</p> <p>“you should be careful who you speak to and what jobs you take”</p> <p>“if you see forms of exploitation, report it, as I know what they are now”</p>	  
Sexual exploitation	<p>“female and male cases of exploitation are the same”</p> <p>“sexual exploitation can be online”</p> <p>“sexting is illegal”</p> <p>“I’ve learnt that it is not only men who groom women; it can be the other way”</p>	 
Child exploitation	<p>“child grooming”</p> <p>“people aged 19 groom the most”</p> <p>“children get exploited”</p>	

Figure 2: Exploitation as a learning outcome



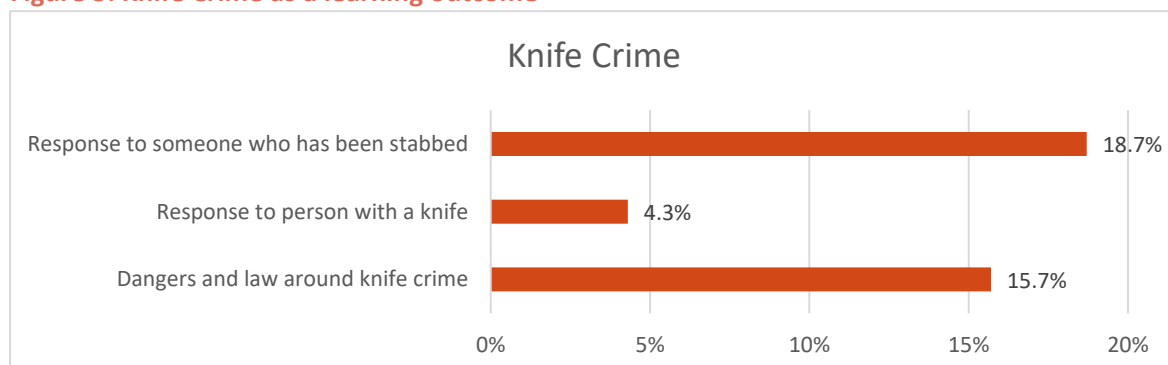
4.2.2 Knife Crime and Associated Behaviours

40% of students reported learning new information about knife crimes and associated behaviours. 18.7% said they learnt most about how to respond if someone (including themselves) are stabbed; 4.3% how to react or respond to someone with a knife; and 15.7% around danger and laws around knife crime. Open text responses where students wrote specific learnings related to each subtheme of exploitation are shown in Box 2. These centred around knowledge and information about how to treat a stab wound, how to stop or control bleeding, prevalence of stabbings, and how to react if a peer produces a knife.

Box 2: Illustrative quotes for knife crime and associated behaviours as learning outcome

Dangers and law around knife crime	<p>“you can get arrested at 10 years old”</p> <p>“every 15 minutes there is a stabbing”</p> <p>“I have learnt knife crimes are worse than I thought”</p> <p>“there is no safe place to be stabbed”</p>	
How to respond to a person with a knife	<p>“to leg it when you might get stabbed”</p> <p>“if someone threatens you with a blade - run”</p>	
How to respond to someone who has been stabbed	<p>“that people can die in under a minute”</p> <p>“although a knife gives you a small wound, you can still lose a lot of blood”</p> <p>“put pressure on stabbing injury to stop bleeding”</p> <p>“don’t take a knife out when you’ve been stabbed”</p>	

Figure 3: Knife Crime as a learning outcome



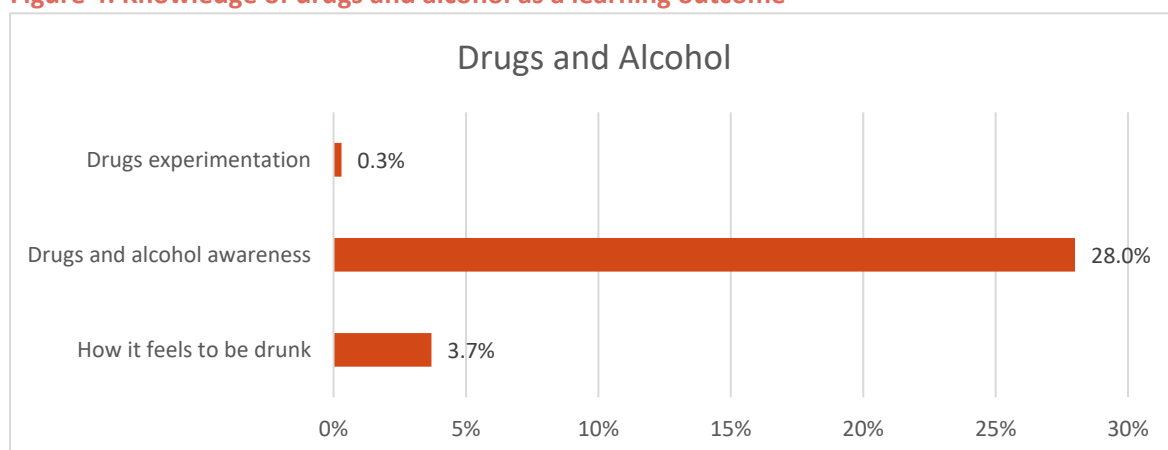
4.2.3 Drug and Alcohol Awareness

32% of students reported learning new information about drugs and alcohol and associated risks and behaviours. 28% said they learned more about general drugs and alcohol information; 3.7% how it feels to be drunk; and 0.3% information about safer drug experimentation. Open text responses where students wrote specific learnings related to each subtheme of drug and alcohol awareness are shown in Box 3. These were primarily centred upon how to respond to someone who is intoxicated and to keep them safe, the alcohol content/volume in alcopops, information of different overdose scenarios, and how to safely experiment with illicit, psychoactive drugs.

Box 3: Illustrative quotes for drug and alcohol awareness as a learning outcome

How it feels to be intoxicated	<p>“what drunk people see”</p> <p>“what it looks like when you have beer goggles on”</p>	 
Facts about alcohol	<p>“that there is vodka in blue WKD”</p> <p>“that alcohol is a drug”</p> <p>“what to do if you come across a drunk individual”</p> <p>“don’t put someone to bed when they have drank lots of alcohol”</p>	 
Facts about drugs	<p>“that weed is different depending on where it’s grown”</p> <p>“there are many different ways to overdose”</p> <p>“how long you get in prison for having drugs”</p>	 
Drugs experimentation	<p>“try things at an older age”</p>	

Figure 4: Knowledge of drugs and alcohol as a learning outcome



5. Summary of Key Findings

In the Zone was established in 2021 as part of Wirral Youth Justice Strategic Plan 2021-2022, to provide a range of programmes to prevent and tackle violent crime from a Serious Youth Violence prevention aspect. In the Zone delivers information to young people about subjects that may affect them today, including, knife crime, exploitation, gangs, violence, peer pressure, drugs and alcohol, anti-social behaviour, and keeping safe on the internet. The intervention provides CYP with tools to ensure they gain knowledge and skills to keep them safe in the community. This report presented the findings from a process and outcome evaluation of In the Zone detailing programme implementation and impacts for the children and young people of Wirral as well as the wider community.

5.1 Implementation and delivery of the programme

The findings of this evaluation have alluded some key findings regarding the initial development, and implementation of the programme which was funded by the MVRP in 2021. Considerations in the development and implementation included choosing the appropriate age-group of pupils to target and how best to engage with schools. Going forward it is recommended to consider delivering the programme to those in primary school (year 7) who may be at risk for grooming, bullying, or violence from older peers, due to being the youngest, new cohort of pupils in the school. In doing so, the programme content should be age-appropriate and delivered sensitively.

Some barriers encountered when attempting to get In the Zone off the ground were relating to the schools and their lack of understanding of what the programme entailed. Furthermore, lack of buy-in or engagement from academic institutions was slow at the beginning. However, now that most schools in Wirral are signed up to the programme it may be feasible to begin to deliver outside the Wirral. Due to the positive impact of the programme providing schools in Sefton, Knowsley, Liverpool, and St Helen's access to the programme so that they can tailor it to their specific needs and available resources will have a significant positive impact on the children and young people in schools across Merseyside as a whole.

Another barrier was pertaining to poor resources at schools when the programme is being delivered over a day. To navigate this going forward, it is recommend that a clear list of staff needs when on-site be provided to schools along with all other information about the programme.

The interactive board game style of delivery was considered by most as being a facilitator in the success and interest in the programme by academic institutions. Furthermore, the multi-agency flexible approach to the delivery was also seen as one of the main facilitators for In the Zone success. Continued multi-agency collaboration of the services who deliver each of the zones is recommended and to share information about what works, and what does not work. This will provide continued robustness of the content and impactful delivery of the programme.

5.2 Impact of In the Zone

Evidence on the outcomes and impacts of the programme were evident in the interviews with stakeholders and from the analyses of In the Zone monitoring data in the form of evaluation forms completed by pupils at the end of an In the Zone day. It was noted that a large number of pupils had lack of awareness and understanding about coercion or grooming by peers that may not be much older than they are. Stakeholders believed that by successfully delivering information about how to be aware of this and how to prevent harm through coercion or grooming was a measure of success of the programme. Furthermore, the pupil evaluation forms reflected this with 22% of pupils stating that they learned new information about different forms of exploitation than they had known previously.

40% of pupils reported learning new information about knife-related violence, particularly how to respond to a stabbing event or a person who may be threatening with a knife. 28% reported that they now know how to respond to someone who is intoxicated or overdosing. Considering the incidences of overdose and intoxication in Merseyside A&E, this is a critical skill to have as a youth who may be in company with people using alcohol or drugs. Continued delivery of these are highly recommended.

Other new learning by pupils were associated with cybercrime, sexting, and missing people. Future consideration should be given to cyber safety particularly as almost all children and young people have access to Wi-Fi, smartphones, tablets, and laptops nowadays, putting them at great risk for online grooming and coercion. Continued updating of the curriculum is advised to be timely and current and specific to the needs of Wirral communities.

Stakeholders noted that the programme discussions were more successful when teachers were not in the classroom during programme delivery. It was felt that this was due to pupils having a different viewpoint of the In the Zone staff and had more trust in them. In one instance this resulted in a disclosure of a pupil having purchased a knife, which may not have been said otherwise. Continued collaboration with the school and teachers is recommended particularly in terms of the schools safeguarding policies, however, delivery of the programme should continue without the teacher present.

Almost half (49.3%) of pupils reported that their level of enjoyment of In the Zone was "amazing". This may be an indicator as to why some pupils availed of the signposting to youth clubs and services in Wirral. Ongoing support and signposting by leaders in all zones is recommended to build trusting relationships between youth services and children and young people.

5.3 Conclusion

The findings suggest a number of key learnings about the process and outcomes of In the Zone schools programme. Overall the programme provides key learning and information for pupils of schools in Wirral about Knife crime, exploitation, alcohol and drugs, and county lines. The evaluation has provided robust evidence of a successful programme in engaging and supporting young people who may be at risk for violence and associated behaviours.

6. References

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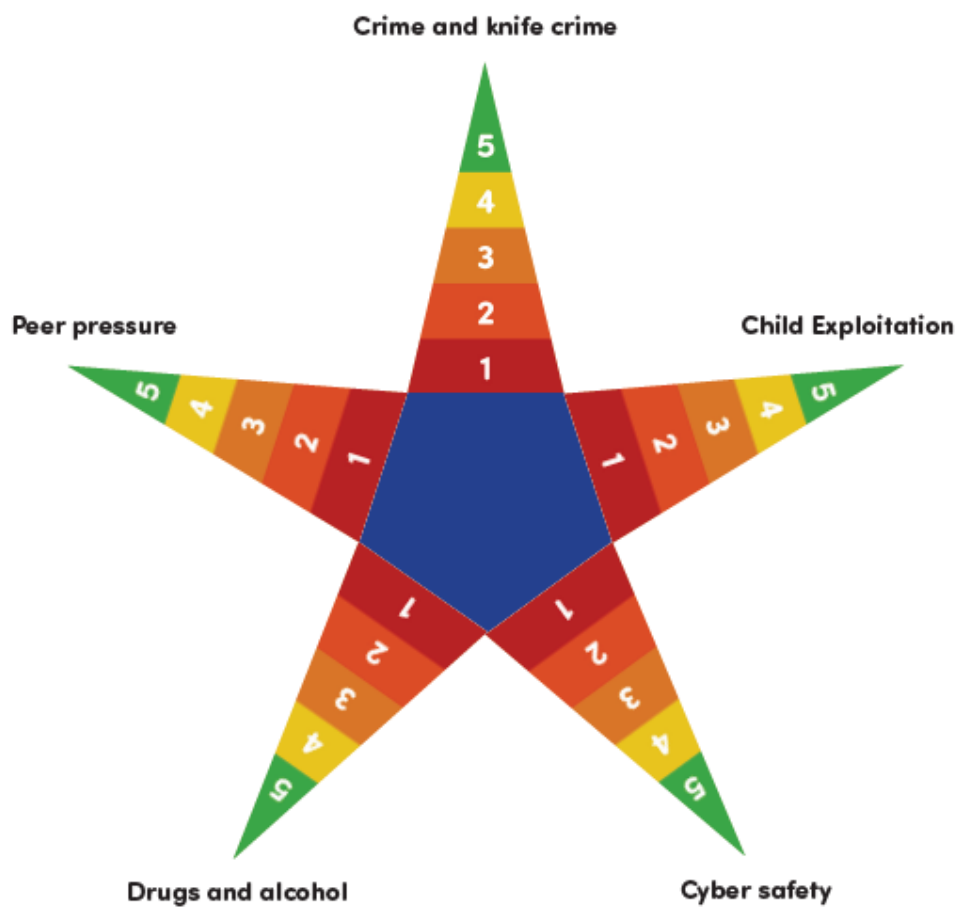
World Health Organisation (WHO). (2014) *Global status report on violence prevention 2014*. Geneva: World Health Organization.

7. Appendices

7.1 Appendix 1 Outcome Star 2023

Name of the session here

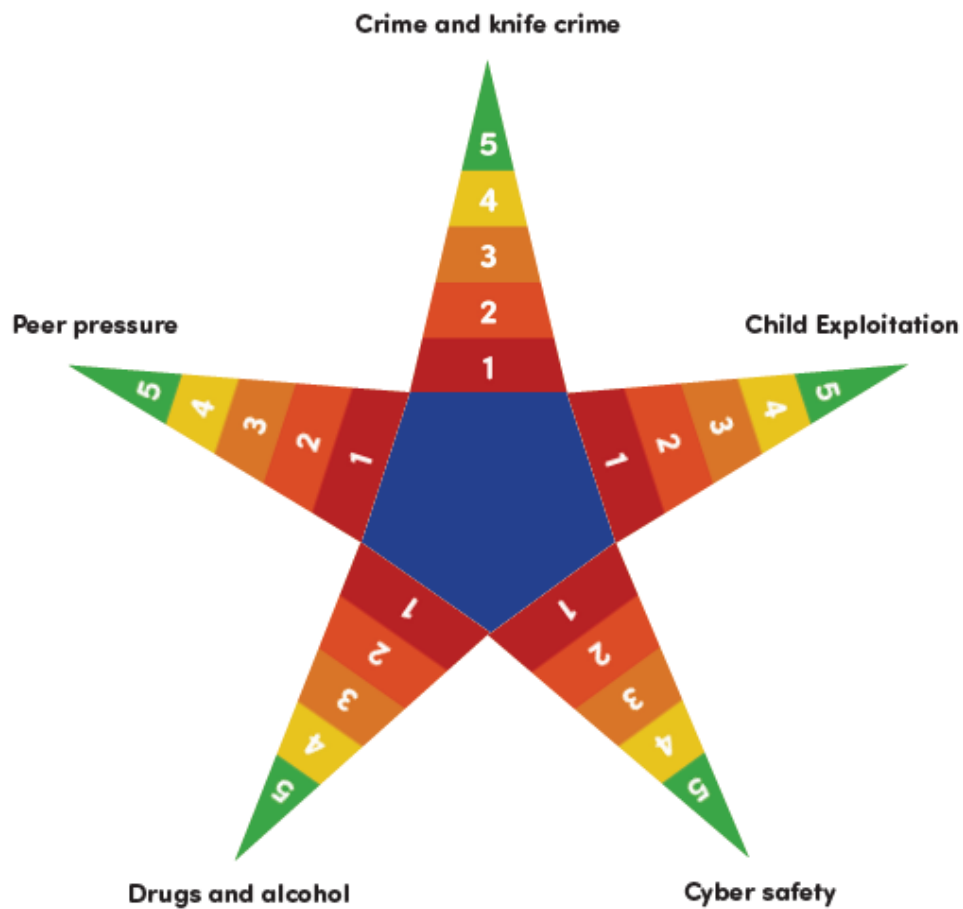
Before we start the session let's take a look at the star below. You can see there are 5 subjects. Can you tell us how much you think you **already know** about the 5 subjects by circling a number from 1 to 5 for each subject.



- 1 - I don't know anything
- 3 - I know some things
- 5 - I know everything

After the session

Now you have completed the session, let's look at the star below again. Can you tell us how much (from 1 to 5) you think you **now know** about the 5 subjects.



What is one thing you have learned from the sessions today?

.....

Was there anything you would like to change about the sessions?

.....

7.2 Appendix 2 Past 'In the Zone' Information Sheet with Six Zones

IN THE ZONE

Welcome to in the Zone, your child will be a participant in a group work day with their year group ran by the Local Authority and Merseyside Police. The "In the Zone" event has been developed to give young people information about subjects that affect young people today. It is hoped that it will give young people the tools to ensure they gain knowledge and skills to keep them safe in the community. Within the fact sheet there are also links for parents and carers to access to gain additional information and support if required.

Information Sheet

'Choose life & not a knife'.– (Youth Justice Service)

The Choose life & Not a Knife Zone is an interactive and informal educative board game that focuses on Reducing Serious Violence and Knife Crime whilst also engaging young people and furnishing them with a knowledge and understanding about the subject matter. The young people who participate in this zone must work as a collective group to navigate their way around the board to reach the finish, but along the way they are faced with a variety of obstacles that provide them with a knowledge and understanding about the law in relation to knife crime, facts and figures, real life scenarios and victim empathy. The main outcome of the session is to raise young people's awareness about the impact and rise in violent and knife crime amongst young people both Locally and Nationally. You can find more information and support in relation to this issue at www.noknivesbetterlives.co.uk, alternatively if you have concerns about any young people then you can visit www.wirralsafeguarding.co.uk for advice and guidance.

Going Country—(Compass Team)

The Going Country resource being used with students will look at issues around criminal exploitation and county lines. The session will be facilitated by The Compass Team (Wirral's Child Exploitation Team). During the session young people will be encouraged to think about keeping safe in the community and will learn more about topics such as grooming. Criminal exploitation is when a young person is groomed, forced or coerced into carrying out criminal acts for the profit/ gain of another individual. Some examples of things young people may be exploited into doing are drug dealing/ county lines, committing acts of violence and robberies. Over recent years criminal exploitation is becoming more widely recognised and it is important young people from all backgrounds are aware of how this occurs and ways of keeping themselves safe. More information on Criminal Exploitation/ County Lines can be found here: <https://www.wirralsafeguarding.co.uk/county-lines/>

Gangs—(Merseyside Police)

Merseyside Police session aims to raise awareness around gang culture and the associated subjects of weapons, criminal damage, drug misuse and police powers and legislation in relation to Gang crime. Through an innovative board game named "GANGS N LADDERS" the young people will make their way around the board, collecting information about the effects of gangs within our communities, and generate peer discussions about gang culture and how the police can tackle gang crime.

We understand that young people may find it difficult to report matters and may not always feel comfortable to speak to somebody face to face, young people can report incidents or pass information anonymously online to the independent organisation Crimestoppers :<https://crimestoppers-uk.org/> or <https://www.fearless.org/en>

Think * Feel * Do: Peer Pressure & Substance Misuse (Youth Matters)

Think *Feel * Do; explores young peoples understanding on a range of social scenarios they may find themselves in, as a young person living in Wirral. Youth Matters staff have developed this resource to enable young people to explore and discuss the scenarios and think about strategies to support them in the future.

Peer Pressure - is feeling like you have to do something just because all your friends are doing it. This resource enables young people to discuss, share experiences, develop strategies and confidence for young people to make their own choices.

Substance Misuse - follows on from Peer Pressure. The resource focuses on a particular scenario involving drugs and alcohol, that we are aware young people sometimes find themselves in.

For more information on what Youth Matters offers please follow us on Instagram @youthmattersinwirral or contact us by email – youthmatters@wirral.gov.uk

Your Choice' interactive board game- (Anti Social Behaviour Team)

The 'Your Choice' board game has been designed and developed by Wirral Council Anti-Social Behaviour Team. The aim of the game is to both promote and encourage positive behaviour amongst young people in an interesting, informative and fun way. Whilst playing the game examples of behaviour which could be classed as 'Anti -Social' will also be featured, this will allow for further discussion around these issues and will also highlight the consequences that may arise if individuals continue to engage in this type of behaviour. Positive or negative behaviour? It's 'Your Choice'.

A walk in the Park (Response)

A walk in the Park is an interactive Q&A session, using activities, real life scenario's and informal learning opportunities to help educate and advise Young People in relation to Alcohol and Drugs. Pupils choose symbols from the interactive board, and are allowed to explore scenario's they may face as they navigate adolescence. Covering the most frequently asked questions about alcohol and commonly used drugs, this workshop aims to informally educate participants, encourage space for safe conversations, and pass on harm reduction messages to help students make informed choices, and reduce risk.

