

MVP implementation interviews project - Final Report –

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Executive summary

Background

- This small-scale project sought to explore the implementation of the Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP) programme within schools in Scotland.
- This project had the following key aims: (1) to identify any barriers and facilitators to implementation of the MVP programme in Scottish schools, (2) to gain an understanding of teachers' experiences of implementing MVP in their schools. This work was situated within a broader analysis of the MVP programme in Scotland.

Method

- Between January 2021 and April 2021 qualitative data were collected from six teachers in Scottish schools. The teachers were MVP leads and so were responsible for implementing MVP in their school.
- MVP leads were from schools participating in the MVP intervention programme and were contacted via email and phone call to recruit for interview.
- MVP leads were emailed participant information sheets and consent forms. Once consent was received, phone call interviews (lasting between 15-40 mins; average 25 mins) were organised to take place at each participant's convenience.
- Interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed in full verbatim, and analysed using a content analysis approach involving three stages: (1) preparation, (2) organising, and (3) reporting.
- Qualitative data that related to barriers or facilitators to implementation of MVP were highlighted before being mapped to concepts from the Consolidated Framework for Implementation Research (CFIR) framework.
- Inter-rater reliability in the categorisation of concepts was discussed between three members of the research team. After discussion, researchers were able to agree on the organisation of the concepts.

Results

- Following the qualitative analysis, nine facilitators and four barriers to implementing MVP in Scottish schools were identified. These facilitators and barriers related to intervention characteristics, the process of implementation, individual characteristics of those implementing MVP as well as the inner and outer setting of schools.

Facilitators

- Quality of the intervention - MVP resources are of a high quality.
- Process of engaging with implementation - MVP facilitates engagement of young people with the programme.
- Process of planning implementation - MVP can be effectively implemented when advanced planning has taken place and when it is embedded into a pre-existing timetable.

- Individual readiness to implement the intervention - Initial promotion and maintaining momentum facilitates successful implementation.
- Individual self-efficacy to implement the intervention - Ensuring teachers feel confident and able to deliver MVP following training is crucial.
- Culture - Pre-existing school values which align with MVP facilitate implementation.
- Support - When support is tailored to individual needs of staff and pupils, it facilitates implementation.
- Cosmopolitanism – Input from third sector organisations and emergency services was valuable to the implementation process.
- Peer pressure - Replicating what other schools have achieved motivates implementation.

Barriers

- Complexity of the intervention - The time-consuming nature of implementation, particularly considering competing initiatives in schools.
- Process of engaging with implementation - Lack of engagement from the wider staff team within schools.
- Individual self-efficacy to implement the intervention - MVP training did not consistently lead to teachers feeling capable and confident in its implementation.
- Climate - The climate of the school is important, to prioritise and reward efforts to implement MVP.

Discussion

- The findings from this small-scale project suggest that schools need to be in a position to absorb MVP into their culture and climate in order to facilitate MVP and to overcome potential barriers to implementation.
- There needs to be a commitment to making MVP a priority in the school, and to ensure that teachers leading its implementation are supported by the wider team.
- Teachers reported that the initial implementation phase was the most challenging part of the process and required a whole school buy-in. However, once MVP has been implemented, it runs with less involvement.

Conclusions

- From reflecting on the interviews conducted with MVP school teachers, a number of key barriers and facilitators to implementing the programme were found.
- Teachers require school-wide support which is tailored to their needs. There is a desire for support beyond staff and to collaborate with other schools, third sector organisations, and emergency services.
- Teachers need to feel confident and able to deliver MVP following the training sessions.
- Schools need to promote, encourage and maintain the expectation that MVP will be a priority. The culture of schools and other complimentary initiatives can be beneficial for the success of MVP.

Background

This report presents evidence from a small-scale qualitative research project which took place between January 2021 and November 2021. The project was designed to investigate the facilitators and barriers to implementing the Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP) Scotland. This report provides some background on these issues before reporting on the main results and drawing conclusions.

Mentors in Violence Prevention

MVP Scotland is a partnership between the Scottish Government, the Scottish Violence Reduction Unit, and Education Scotland. MVP's vision is to create safe communities built on positive relationships. MVP brings together a diverse range of community partners (police, community learning and development, psychological services, health) to work together with staff in schools. By mid-2016, a total of 13 Local Authorities were involved in MVP, extending reach of the program to 91 schools, 16725 pupils, and 3438 adults (MVP Progress Report, 2016). The programme has a specific focus on reducing gender-based violence.

Outcomes of MVP are focussed primarily upon: exploration of attitudes, beliefs and behaviours concerning gender-based violence as well as violence and aggression in general; growing positive attitudes toward diversity and inclusion; providing young people with strategies to safely challenge behaviours which are detrimental to health and wellbeing; increasing awareness of others' attitudes toward violence; and helping young people demonstrate leadership skills in these areas. To achieve these goals, senior pupils are trained to mentor younger pupils and lead sessions on issues such as sexting, coercive behaviour, and use of language. The MVP Annual Report (MVP Progress Report, 2016, 2019) supports the efficacy of the MVP programme based on staff feedback, attitude questionnaires, and focus groups. A qualitative review of the intervention in three Scottish High schools (Williams & Neville, 2017) found that school staff, mentors, and mentees all reported positive experiences and felt that they had benefitted in terms of changes to their own attitudes and behaviours regarding gender-based violence. Other internal MVP evaluations have also yielded positive effects for the programme (MVP Progress Report, 2016, 2019). However, it should be noted that other UK evaluations have found mixed effects for the effectiveness of MVP (Fox et al., 2020; Fox & Vickers, 2017; Hunter et al., 2021; Williams & Neville, 2013), highlighting the need for research into the implementation of MVP, that is, how it is rolled out in practice.

The present study

This project had the following key aims:

1. To identify key barriers and facilitators to implementation of the MVP programme in Scottish high schools.
2. To gain an understanding of teachers' experiences of implementing MVP in their schools.

Method

Participants

Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the School of Psychological Sciences and Health Ethics Committee at the University of Strathclyde. Our intention was to collect data from 14 teachers from schools where MVP had been implemented. While Local Education Authorities, schools, and teachers were supportive of the study the final number of teachers who took part was six. To protect participant anonymity in this small participant pool, characteristics and demographics of participants will not be discussed in this report.

Interview schedule

The interview schedule was developed for the purposes of this project. The aim of the schedule was to gain an understanding of teachers' experiences of implementing MVP in their schools, concentrating on themes that highlight facilitators and barriers to implementation. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the MVP leads in six Scottish schools. The schedule was structured according to the themes of the Consolidated Framework of Implementation Research (Damschroder et al., 2009).

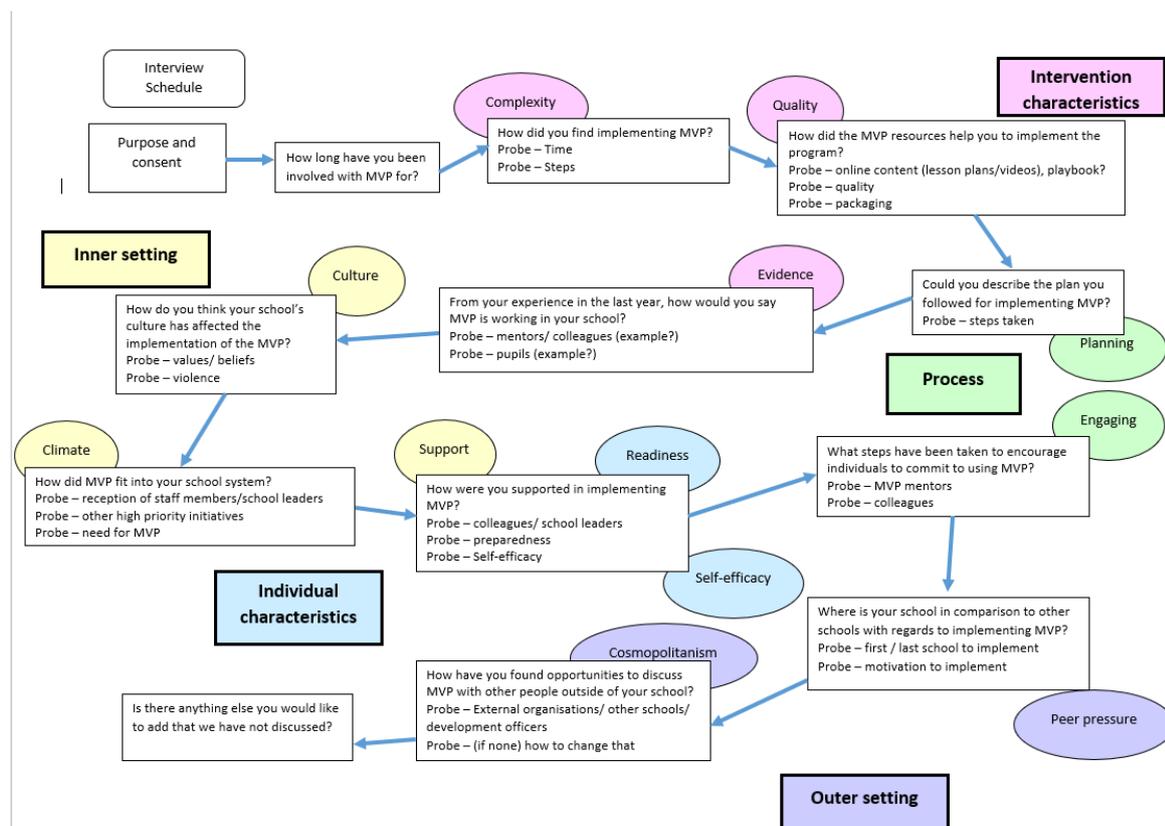
The interview schedule is presented in full in [Appendix A](#).

Procedure

Approval was obtained from Local Education Authorities to contact schools to request their participation. Of those approached, six agreed to take part. This is consistent with previous research taking place in high schools in Scotland (see O'Connor, Rasmussen, Miles, & Hawton, 2009; Russell, Rasmussen, & Hunter, 2020). Reasons for non-participation included timetable constraints and having recently contributed to other research projects. Schools were targeted based on their MVP status (had implemented MVP). This information was gained from Education Scotland and corroborated by Head teachers or their designates.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic and physical distancing guidance, interviews took place via telephone call and each lasted between 15 and 40 minutes. Adapting research methods to fit the current landscape is vitally important to facilitating participation. The topic guide used in the interviews was structured around the CFIR framework. The CFIR is one of the most utilised frameworks for examining implementation. The framework was proposed to consolidate existing models, and definitions on implementation, with the overarching goal to reach more commonality across implementation research. The CFIR is based on theoretical and empirical research from the Diffusion of Innovations Theory (Rogers, 1995), and from work conducted by Greenhalgh et al. (2004) involving a review of 500 published studies to identify key implementation constructs. The interviews explored pre-determined categories including the role of intervention characteristics, inner setting, outer setting, process, and individual characteristics. An example question from interviews which touches on the role of intervention characteristics was *"How did the MVP resources help you to implement the programme?"*

Figure 1: Interview Schedule mapped onto CFIR Framework domains



Analysis

To understand the barriers and facilitators which impact implementation of MVP, a qualitative content analysis was used. The goal of conducting a content analysis was to enrich understanding of the CFIR framework and explore its validity in understanding the implementation of MVP. Content analysis allows a systematic approach to be taken when analysing qualitative data and is content-sensitive, resulting in an understanding of key concepts in relation to the conversation as a whole (Burnard, 1991). A deductive category application (Mayring, 2000) was chosen because of the pre-existing evidence supporting the reliability of the CFIR framework in covering the barriers and facilitators impacting implementation. However, CFIR had not yet been used to measure the experience of teachers implementing MVP, and thus this research extends prior work and offers the opportunity to learn about important factors affecting schools' ability to adopt violence reduction programmes (example of coding table in [Appendix B](#)).

There is no singular way to conduct content analysis correctly, resulting in few studies touching on the procedure of analysis. As recommended by Elo and Kyngas (2007), the present study conducted content analysis through three stages: preparation, organising, and reporting. The preparation stage involved the researcher (RT) becoming immersed in the data. This stage began in conducting

and transcribing the interviews, before reading the transcripts as a whole and in detail. This allows the context of concepts to be fully understood before being extracted and organised. Following this stage, text that related to barriers or facilitators to implementation were highlighted before being mapped to the concepts from the CFIR framework. Once organised, inter-reliability in the categorisation of concepts was discussed between three members of the research team. After discussion, researchers were able to agree on the organisation of all concepts and allowed the reporting of results to take place.

Results

Following the qualitative analysis, nine facilitators and four barriers to implementing MVP in Scottish schools were identified. These facilitators and barriers related to domains from the CFIR framework including; intervention characteristics, the process of implementation, individual characteristics of MVP leads, as well as the inner and outer settings of schools.

Themes and codes resulting from analysing interview data include:

Intervention characteristics (complexity, quality, and evidence)

Teachers require interventions to be easy to implement, prescriptive in nature, with clear steps to follow. A facilitator to implementation is that teachers do not need extensive planning but can pick up resources and deliver the programme following training. However, teachers highlighted that MVP allows them to include their own experiences to make it a personal and relatable experience using real-life examples.

*“(MVP) gives a chance for teachers to bring in their own sort of experiences or exemplification of the different things that are being talked”
(Interviewee 2)*

This suggests that the MVP intervention is viewed as being of a high quality and a reasonable level of complexity which facilitates implementation.

A barrier associated with the intervention lies in the time it takes to train MVP mentors and removing them from class to do so. School timetables do not allow for much flexibility and interventions must recognise that time taken to train in MVP takes away time for other priorities for students such as their main subjects. Similarly, teachers are being pulled in many different directions and MVP is rarely their number one priority, meaning the time commitment involved in implementation can be challenging.

*“It is quite a big-time commitment...when it’s not your number one priority”
(Interviewee 1)*

However, from teachers’ perspectives, MVP seems to gain momentum and once established in a school, can simply be refreshed each year.

“It kind of almost runs itself”
(Interviewee 2)

A bigger buy-in is needed in year 1 but this pays off over time.

“Because it’s been embedded now, the training that we have to give the MVPs is much more minimalist because they just know”
(Interviewee 1)

This indicated that the intervention itself is not too complex for implementation – it takes some initial effort to facilitate before then embedding itself and running with less input.

Process (planning and engaging)

The MVP intervention evidently is successful in engaging young people and schools report the ease in which they can recruit student mentors.

“We have more than enough volunteers... than what we needed every year and then year on year there’s been more kids wanting to be involved in it”
(Interviewee 2)

A barrier that was mentioned in several interviews was a feeling that MVP needed to be more widely promoted throughout the whole school with a desire for engagement from staff who were not directly involved in MVP.

“I feel like we should probably have promoted it a wee bit more, so there was more of an understanding”
(Interviewee 1)

Lack of engagement from the whole staff body in terms of understanding of the importance and relevance of the intervention meant that there were problems with students having the opportunity to engage in the training.

“It was like staff barriers as well, just in terms of letting kids out”
(Interviewee 3)

However, some schools have found that staff are interested in MVP and choose to be involved due to genuine interest in the programme, showing engagement and commitment to MVP.

“All of our teachers...they don’t have to stay for all the inputs, but often some of them choose to, and listen to it”
(Interviewee 1)

Schools' individual planning strategies appear to be important facilitators to implementation. Schools which were able to adopt MVP and integrate it into the pre-existing timetabling and structure reported the most success.

"We looked through and picked out the relevant topics and then we embedded it in our PSE programme, and so the MVP mentors go in and deliver it as part of the PSE delivery, and they know exactly what dates...heading for each topic across the year for each year group. So, it worked really well"
(Interviewee 2)

Individual Characteristics (Readiness and Self-efficacy)

Organisational commitment to implementing MVP was important for facilitating implementation. Several schools mentioned the importance of readiness, illustrated through increasing awareness throughout the school about MVP.

"We hold an MVP week in the school so that's about promoting MVP and do assemblies and showcasing MVP and that takes place around September time, October usually. So that kinda keeps things kinda going and fresh"
(Interviewee 4)

Following this initial indication of readiness, momentum was mentioned as a key facilitator. After the initial promotion of MVP, implementation in following years was consistently reported as being an easier process for both staff and pupils.

"Because we're now sort of in our second, third year, we're kind of into the swing of it now, and the pupils are really familiar with it, as are staff and parents, and because they're used to the format, it's much easier"
(Interviewee 2)

Not only does implementation become easier, but commitment to MVP increases as it becomes embedded in the culture of the school.

"The only reason they've bought into MVP is cos it's been established for 6 years, you know we've built it up every single year"
(Interviewee 4)

Self-efficacy was highlighted by teachers and some displayed low levels of self-efficacy following the training.

"No {I did not feel confident to deliver MVP}...it could be an age thing to be honest, because I was younger at the time and it was a big thing to do a whole school initiative myself...it was quite intimidating."
(Interviewee 4)

However, others' experiences of the MVP training meant that they left feeling:

*“confident and safe and secure and talking to about those [MVP] issues with students”
(Interviewee 5)*

Inner Setting (Culture, Climate, Support)

The pre-existing culture of schools and the associated norms / values held are important for implementing MVP. Schools which hold values complimentary to MVP’s own could facilitate implementation and mean that MVP can support what is being taught through other lessons and vice-versa.

*“the content of the lessons is really relevant in terms of what we’re teaching in PSE, in terms of what’s been taught in our RMPS and all around school in terms of values and things.”
(Interviewee 6)*

Recognition of the relevance of MVP to the culture of the school means that it can be incorporated into the timetable and curriculum.

From listening to teachers’ experiences, it became evident that while schools pre-existing cultures are important, MVP can change the culture of schools.

*“There’s been several occasions where we’ve had not just mentors but mentees come to a staff member and say things like y’know ‘I’ve heard this’ ‘I’ve seen that’ and y’know they talk about red flags and they talk about not being a bystander and y’know these are key words that the kids are recognising”
(Interviewee 5)*

Successful implementation of MVP means that pupils have the language to use to highlight instances of violence and prevent escalation.

The climate of a school and their ability to absorb change is key to the facilitation of an intervention. An environment which promotes and rewards engagement allows MVP to be embedded fully

*“MVP staff team are very enthusiastic about MVP, they are very much pro-MVP and promoting MVP, and that encouragement should hopefully, or does hopefully, rub off on the young people”
(Interviewee 5)*

In settings where there is no expectation that MVP would be a priority or where involvement in MVP is not consistently rewarded, teachers’ other priorities can mean implementation is challenging

“in the last year I would say it hasn’t worked, it’s something that’s constantly on my remit, and it’s like, do you know, I don’t know, it kind of highlights in red every time I read it, and I really need to do something, and I want to do

something with it, but we haven't...this year it's just...we've not made it the priority that it should be"
(Interviewee 3)

On a similar theme, the support provided within schools is instrumental in facilitating implementation of MVP. From discussion, support from the management team combined with being offered autonomy and independence as MVP lead facilitates implementation.

"I'm very encouraged with the MVP programme, I like it, I think it's very good. I think you had to have a good management team behind you who are gonna support MVP"
(Interviewee 5)

Whilst being trusted to take an autonomous approach as an MVP lead works well for some teachers.

"I would say I was very much encouraged and supported to implement MVP in the way that I thought was best in our school"
(Interviewee 5)

Others require a more supported approach

"Trying to organise the kids' sessions then going into classes and stuff on my own it was aye quite stressful."
(Interviewee 1)

Support should be communicated between MVP leads and the management team and should be tailored to individual leads' needs.

Outer Setting (Cosmopolitanism and Peer Pressure)

After establishing the necessary setting within schools to facilitate implementation of interventions, the outer setting was recognised as being important. Teachers highlighted a desire to collaborate with other schools who are also going through the process of MVP.

"I'm not actually sure what other schools...are running it, and that might actually be quite good to know, because then if there were kind of schools in our local area that we could link together with"
(Interviewee 2)

"An opportunity to speak to other schools that are maybe not...not running it"
(Interviewee 3)

A support network of schools where experiences can be discussed and learning can be shared, may facilitate implementation.

Teachers expressed the beneficial impact of cosmopolitanism and support from external organisations such as those in the third sector and the emergency services. Involvement from these groups was recognised as adding value through being able to offer personal experiences with the topics discussed within the MVP.

“Women’s Aid...came in to help... It was really helpful to hear from someone that wasn’t us, because as much as we give examples of things that we’ve seen and we, you know, we’ve heard and we’ve experienced, she does it every day”

(Interviewee 3)

Discussion

The aim of this research was to learn from teachers' first-hand experiences of implementing MVP in their school and to understand potential barriers and facilitators to implementation. Following six interviews, a number of barriers and facilitators were identified. Those that were referred to most by the MVP leads and were therefore the strongest facilitators and barriers pertained predominantly to the inner setting (culture, climate, and complexity) as specified by the CFIR. However, another strong facilitator identified referred to intervention characteristics (complexity):

- Culture (school norms and values that align with MVP)
- Climate (prioritisation of MVP)
- Support (support for MVP leads)
- Complexity (ease of implementing MVP)

Overall, the findings from this small-scale project suggest that schools need to be in a position to absorb MVP into their culture and climate in order to facilitate MVP and overcome potential barriers to implementation. There needs to be a commitment to making MVP a priority in the school and to ensure that teachers leading its implementation are supported by the wider team. Teachers reported that the initial implementation phase was the most challenging part of the process and required a whole school buy-in. Once MVP has been implemented, it runs with less involvement and is viewed as being of a high quality by MVP leads.

Strengths and Limitations

The current project is a small-scale qualitative study exploring MVP leads' experiences of implementing MVP in their school settings. While a strength of the current research is the rich and in-depth information that was gathered, a limitation is the inability to generalise qualitative findings. A further limitation is the timings of the interviews; teachers implemented MVP in 2018-19 and they were interviewed during the context of the pandemic in 2021. This was due to the limited access to teachers during this time period and competing demands placed on teachers due to the pandemic. Nonetheless, transferrable insights from teachers' accounts illuminate understandings of barriers and facilitators to the implementation of MVP which warrant further, longitudinal investigation.

Recommendations

- Teachers require school-wide support which is tailored to their needs. There is a desire for support beyond staff and to collaborate with other schools, third sector organisations, and the emergency services.
- Teachers need to feel confident and able to deliver MVP following the training sessions.
- Schools need to promote, encourage and maintain the expectation that MVP will be a priority. The culture of schools and other complimentary initiatives can be beneficial for the success of MVP.
- There is a need for further longitudinal, quantitative research exploring the implementation of MVP in order to demonstrate that it has a generalisable benefit on key outcomes such as reducing gender-based violence or attitudes.

Conclusion

This project is an important insight into teachers' experiences of the implementation of MVP in schools in Scotland. This project highlights the importance of understanding teachers' perspectives and experiences of the potential facilitators and barriers to implementing MVP in school settings. Engaging with young people who have experienced the MVP programme, and other key stakeholder groups, will contribute towards furthering our understanding on how best to support the implementation of MVP moving forward. The conclusions concerning the implementation of MVP are dependent on ongoing and future research demonstrating that it has a generalisable benefit on key outcomes such as reducing gender-based violence or attitudes.

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Appendix A: Interview schedule.

1. How long have you been involved with MVP for?

2. How did you find implementing MVP?

Probe – time

Probe – steps

3. How did the MVP resources help you to implement the programme?

Probe – online content, playbook?

Probe – quality

Probe – packaging

4. Could you describe the plan you followed for implementing MVP?

Probe – steps taken

5. From your experience in the last year, how would you say MVP is working in your school?

Probe – mentors/ colleagues (example?)

Probe – pupils (example?)

6. How do you think your school's culture has affected the implementation of the MVP?

Probe – violence values/ beliefs

Probe – other high priority initiatives

Probe – reception of staff members/school leaders

Probe – need for MVP

7. How were you supported in implementing MVP?

Probe – colleagues/ school leaders

Probe – preparedness

Probe – confidence

8. What steps have been taken to encourage individuals to commit to using MVP?

Probe – MVP mentors

Probe – colleagues

9. How have you found opportunities to discuss MVP with other people outside of your school?

Probe – External organisations/ other schools/ development officers

Probe – (if none) how to change that

10. Where is your school in comparison to other schools with regards to implementing MVP?

Probe – first / last school to implement

Probe – motivation to implement

11. Is there anything else you would like to add that we have not discussed?

Thank interviewee for their participation.

Appendix B: Coding table

Theme	Code	Meaning	Barrier/Facilitator
Intervention Characteristics	Quality	MVP resources are of a high quality. They allow teachers to deliver training without extensive planning and leave space for the inclusion of personal experiences as exemplification.	Facilitator – MVP resources are viewed as being of a high quality.
	Complexity	MVP is time consuming in its initial implementation phase which can be challenging, but MVP gains momentum and once embedded in a school it becomes easier to run each year.	Barrier – MVP is time consuming, especially with competing initiatives in schools.
Process	Engaging		Both – MVP facilitates the engagement of young people. A barrier to implementing MVP lies in engagement amongst the wider staff team.
	Planning	Schools which were able to integrate MVP into pre-existing timetabling and structure reported the most success. For example, picking out relevant topics from MVP and allowing MVP mentors to deliver those sessions during PSE.	Facilitator - Planning effectively facilitates implementation, particularly when MVP is embedded into pre-existing timetabling.
Individual Characteristics	Readiness	Increasing awareness throughout the school to prepare for implementation acted as a facilitator to implementation. Following initial promotion, maintaining momentum and commitment ensured continued success.	Facilitator – ensuring schools are ready to promote and embed MVP into their schools.
	Self-efficacy	Ensuring teachers feel confident in their ability to deliver MVP following the training should be a focus in future training sessions. Some felt intimidated at the prospect of leading a whole school initiative whereas others felt confident.	Both – Ensuring teachers feel confident to deliver MVP is crucial. In some cases, schools reported that this was not the case following the training.
Inner Setting	Culture		Facilitator – In participating schools, culture was reported to support implementation.

	Climate	In settings where there is no expectation that MVP would be a priority or where involvement in MVP is not consistently rewarded, teachers' other priorities can mean implementation is challenging.	Barrier- schools reported that the climate prevented implementation where MVP was not consistently prioritised and rewarded.
	Support	Support requirements should be communicated between MVP leads and the management team and should be tailored to individual needs. Some teachers expressed a desire for autonomy to lead to the programme as they wish, whilst others wanted more support from their colleagues.	Facilitator – Schools report that when support is tailored to individual needs and requirements, it facilitates implementation.
Outer Settings	Cosmopolitanism	Schools expressed a desire for collaboration with other schools (who are and are not implementing MVP) as well as seeking support from external organisations. Schools found input from third sector organisations and emergency services valuable	Facilitator – input from third sector organisations and emergency services was felt to be valuable. More cosmopolitanism was desired.
	Peer Pressure	Peer pressure was a concept which was rarely mentioned by teachers, suggesting that schools either are unaware of others progress or do not feel under pressure to progress in the same way as others. However, one teacher highlighted a recognition that they may be further behind than other schools and discussed how they might try to replicate the progress of other schools.	Facilitator – While rarely mentioned, peer pressure appeared to act as a motivator to replicate the progress of other schools.