

# BLOCKS Primary School Transitions Programme

## Implementation Evaluation

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### Introduction

Delivered by the Salford Foundation, BLOCKS is a child centred intervention established in response to a concern from primary schools in Greater Manchester that knife carrying and intergenerational violence was increasing and that this was affecting younger children. Pupils exhibiting these behaviours were recognised as having the greatest risk of disengaging with education and a heightened vulnerability to criminal exploitation and involvement. The programme aims to support vulnerable primary school children to successfully transition into a secondary school setting.

The programme runs in 10 primary schools in deprived areas of Manchester, targeting pupils aged 10-11. By providing 1-to-1 mentoring sessions over at least a 6-month period, the programme aims to empower and support children to become more self-aware, improve their confidence and self-esteem; manage their emotions, understand the impact of their actions on others and to stay safe.

The programme draws on local expertise and an international evidence-base supporting mentoring / skills-based programmes as effective tools in reducing youth violence, in particular in recognising the impact of ACEs and trauma and the importance of early intervention.

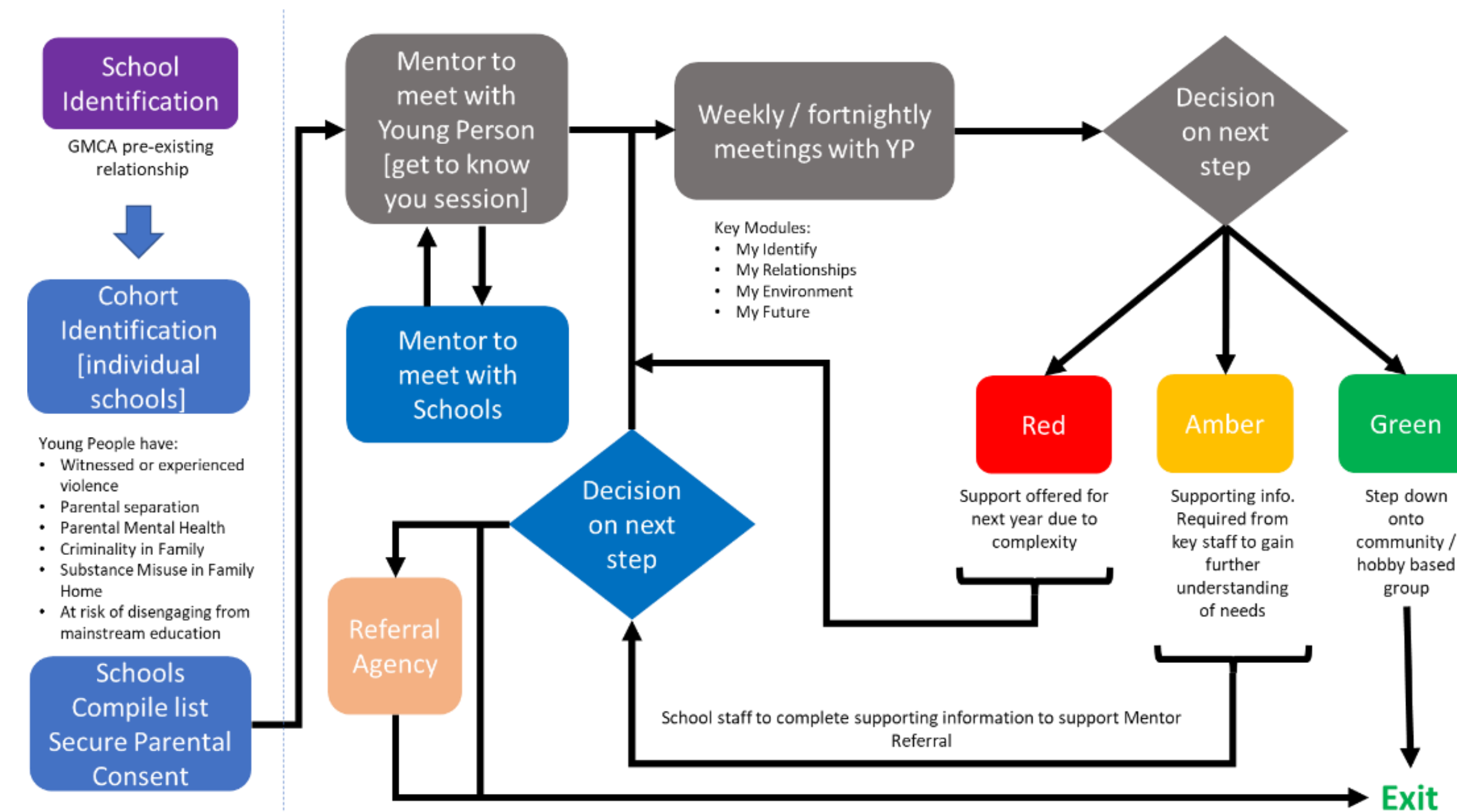
### Evaluation

This evaluation by Manchester Metropolitan University's Crime & Wellbeing Big Data Centre, focussed the programme's first year of operation. It included:

- Developing a Theory of Change
- Develop a 'client journey' exploring the various stages of delivery and their potential key data capture opportunities
- Interviews with teachers and other key stakeholders
- Preliminary analysis of the available quantitative data

### Client Journey

The client journey aided planning of data collection by identifying several key points of data collection, including referral criteria, entry and exit self-reflection questionnaires, RAG rating at potential service exit, and contextual data from schools themselves.



### Stakeholder Perspectives

Schools' perspectives of BLOCKS were overwhelmingly positive with all wanting the programme to continue. Teachers reported that children who participated in the programme exhibited positive changes in their behaviour and (almost all of them) had made a successful transition to high school. The programme did not result in the stigmatisation of participating children. Mentoring was planned to offer minimal disruption to students' mainstream education and was felt to be beneficial even to those that missed other lessons.

"it's good to have the additionality of the BLOCKS programme which provides the resource for children that need more, for those with higher needs, greater vulnerabilities and risks".

"it kind of gives us a little bit more of an insight as to what this child might be facing. Then we can kind of pre-plan what we could do to help them stay in school"

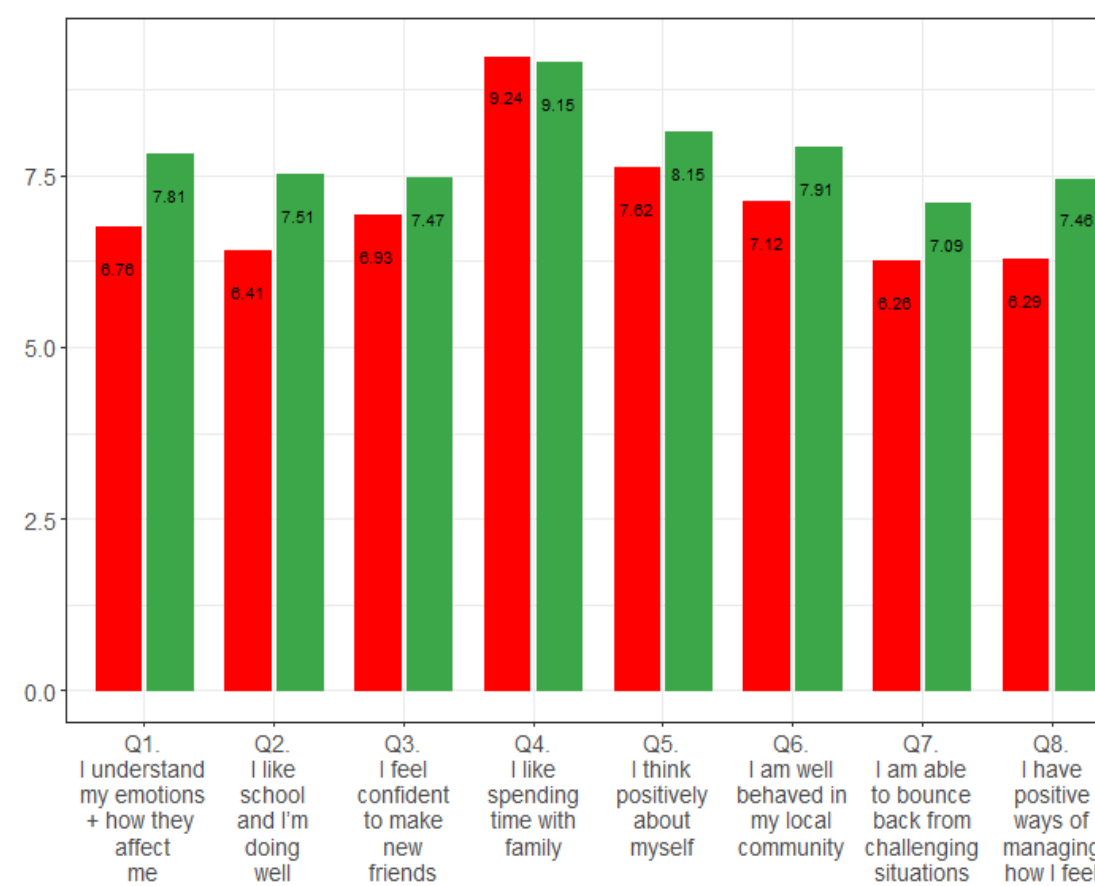
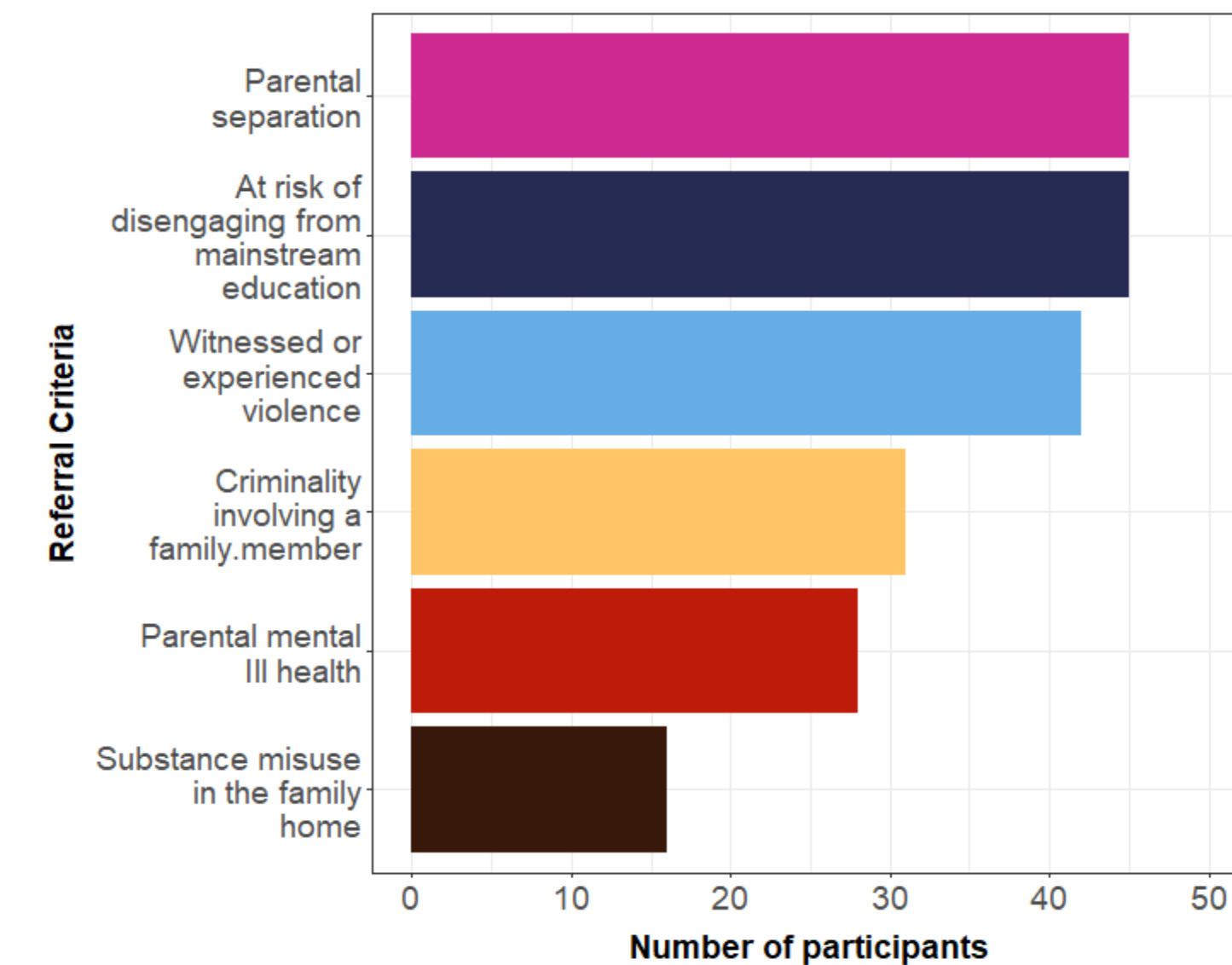
"the kids that [the programme is] working with have barriers to their learning that [the mentor] addresses more so than the English or Maths lesson that they're coming out of"

"it would be really sad if the project stopped because it is having a real impact with children"

### Referral Criteria

141 children were referred onto the programme in its first year, with referral criteria recorded for 59.

80% of these children met 3 or 4 referral criteria, with parental separation, risk of disengaging from education, and witnessing or experiencing violence being the most common criteria.



### Entry and Exit Data

Students were asked 8 questions score 1-10 via self-reflection forms at entry and exit of the programme.

Statistically significant positive changes were observed in 5 of these questions (Q1, Q2, Q6, Q7, and Q8) are. Only Q4 ('I like spending time with family.') exhibited an overall negative change.

### Challenges

While a limited referral criteria was needed to effectively target resources towards those with greatest need and ensure a consistent delivery model, some stakeholders said they would prefer a more flexible approach that could include more children or those that did not fit these criteria.

Gaining parental consent was at times challenging with some parents being unresponsive or unreceptive despite enthusiasm from the child. It was found that mentors rather than teachers attempting to gain consent was more successful.

While schools were positive about delivery of the programme at their school, there was difficulty engaging schools in evaluation, in particular securing additional data to enable a more complete picture of the challenges being faced by children and their families.

Understanding the best age for intervention was also challenging, with some teachers reporting that intervention would be better even earlier than aged 10-11.