

REPORT TO SCSP EXECUTIVE GROUP

Date of Meeting:

Report Author	Stephen Betts (Learn Sheffield CEO & Sheffield SAFE Taskforce Chair)
Report Title	Sheffield SAFE Taskforce Update
Date of Report	14 December 2023
Agency Decision Maker	n/a

Reason for report being presented to this group: *(tick)*

For decision		For discussion	X	For Information	X
For action		For dissemination	X	Other	

Report already considered by: *(links to other partnerships etc)*

n/a

How does this link to the [SCSP Priorities/Business Plan](#):

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Summary of key messages / areas for discussion: *(including the voice of the child/young person)*

<p>The DfE recommend that SAFE Taskforces are overseen by their local Safeguarding Partnership.</p> <p>The Partnership agreed to take on this role in June 2022 in order to support: project evaluation, conflict resolution and the dissemination of learning as required.</p> <p>This update includes the initial findings and learning from the year one (of three) evaluation.</p>
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Key risks identified: *(please provide RAG rating)* No partnership risks identified.

Decisions required by the Partnership:

No decisions required.

Are there: *(detail)*

Legal Implications		n/a
Financial Implications		n/a
HR Implications		n/a
Equality Implications		n/a

Sheffield Children Safeguarding Partnership (SCSP)

SAFE Taskforce Update (December 2023)

Introduction

The DfE SAFE Taskforce is a three-year pilot project with the purpose of reducing serious violence in ten target areas. Learn Sheffield is the lead organisation for the Sheffield SAFE Taskforce and more information can be found here: <https://www.learnsheffield.co.uk/Projects/Sheffield-SAFE-Taskforce>.

The DfE recommend that SAFE Taskforces are overseen by their local Safeguarding Partnership. The Sheffield Children Safeguarding Partnership agreed to take on this role in June 2022 in order to support: project evaluation, conflict resolution and the dissemination of learning as required.

DfE SAFE Taskforce - Overview

- Purpose is reduction of serious violence
- £30m 3 year pilot project in 10 areas
- New approach to funding by the DfE
- Sheffield receive £3.7m over 3 years
- School led and secondary focussed but transition cohorts could be included
- Taskforce combines secondary leaders with other key stakeholders
- Set-up phase January - June 2022
- Includes a strategic needs assessment and the development of a delivery plan
- Delivery phase July/September 2022 to the end of 2024/5 school year



Support for vulnerable young people in serious violence hotspots

Young people who are most at risk of serious violence or gang exploitation will receive targeted support to keep them engaged in education and attending lessons

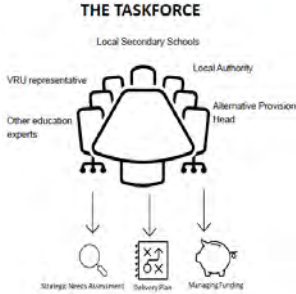
From: Department for Education and VRU Quince FFP
Published 2 December 2021
Last updated 17 December 2021 — 519,861 views



Background

SCSP will undertake the governance of the pilot locally, Learn Sheffield is the lead organisation for the Sheffield Taskforce and the commissioning lead, project co-ordinator, lead data analyst and Taskforce Chair roles are provided by Learn Sheffield. The taskforce itself is composed of representatives of the local secondary sector, the LA, the VRU and other stakeholders.

Taskforce Composition



SUPPORT TO THE TASKFORCE

- Commissioning Lead: Sai Patel
 - Find the right providers and procure them to deliver the interventions the Taskforce has chosen
- Project Co-Ordinator: Sam Dunker
 - Provide administrative support, manage funding and report back to DfE
- Data Analyst: Kate Wilkinson
 - Carry out the Strategic Needs Assessment looking at education and crime data with YOS and VRU
- Taskforce Chair: Stephen Betts

Governance

- The DfE recommend that the Taskforce is overseen by the local Safeguarding Partnership

The role and parameters of each Taskforce (see slide below) were set by the DfE, but each pilot area can work within that to design an agreed approach for their locality. This has been underpinned by a Needs Analysis for their area to support their understanding of the cohorts that would be supported – as outlined below.

What is a SAFE Taskforce?

Taskforces will:

- Invest in and commission interventions to:
 - Reduce involvement in serious violence
 - Improve social emotional regulation and well-being
 - Improve attendance
 - Improve behaviour in school & the local area
- Ensure the right young people access the interventions
- Create an upstream focus on attendance and behaviour in schools

Taskforces should not (be):

- A forum or case meeting for discussing individual pupils and their needs
- A pot of money to be split up between schools at the table and used in siloes in each school
- Duplicate existing BAU functions
- Over criminalise children and young people or just be focused on those already involved in serious violence

Who should the Taskforce support?

Locations

Birmingham
Manchester
Leeds
Sheffield
Liverpool
Newham
Lambeth
Southwark
Bradford
Haringey

Cohorts

- Pupils already known to be involved in serious violence or in close proximity to serious violence
- Pupils who are disengaged from education who are more likely to end up on the pathway into serious violence
- Likely to include high proportions of pupils from recognised vulnerable groups (Children in need, Looked after children and those with SEND)
- Primarily key stage 3 and before serious violence begins to peak - younger/older children can be targeted if already known to be involved in serious violence

SAFE interventions are focused on pupils across the local authority in early secondary school (years 7,8 and 9), as this is before serious violence (such as weapon carrying) begins to peak. The strategic needs assessment has been used to identify the young people with the highest levels of need in each area.

The Sheffield SAFE Taskforce has invested in and commissioned interventions for those at risk to:

- Reduce involvement in serious violence;
- Improve social emotional regulation and well-being;
- Improve attendance;
- Improve behaviour in school and the local area.

Part of the role of the SAFE Taskforce is to get upstream on serious violence by tackling the education indicators associated with it. We know young people who are disengaged from education are often also more likely to be involved in serious violence, for example. The following two cohorts have been a focus:

- Pupils already known to be involved in serious violence or who are in close proximity to serious violence due to contextual factors such as peer groups, family, or neighbourhood; and
- Pupils who are disengaged from education e.g. truancy, suspension or exclusion from school who are more likely to end up on the pathway into serious violence.

This means the cohort has, as expected, included high proportions of pupils from recognised vulnerable groups (e.g. children known to children's services (including social care) and those with SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities)).

Approach

These slides set out the approach to this work in Sheffield and are taken from a presentation to the national SAFE board in October.

We worked with DfE analysts to ensure that the providers who emerged through the commissioning process met the DfE standards, based on the Youth Endowment Fund research.

Our approach



- We elected to approach the SAFE programme through the commissioning of a framework of providers
- We ran an invitation to tender programme in the summer of 2022
- Five approved providers:
 - External (commercial): Adventure Expeditions, the Golddigger Trust, Sheffield Wednesday FC Community Programme, Unravel
 - Internal (school-led): Westfield School
- All of the providers are local to Sheffield and know the context of the city
- All interventions (except Adventure Expeditions) are weekly and long-term
- The providers have a range of different approaches to supporting young people
- Adventure Expeditions is deemed an amber intervention, all others are green





A data informed approach

- We created a skilled team of data analysts to support the Strategic Needs Assessment
- For the first time, we combined data from a range of sources including: education, social care, families, youth offending and information from the Ministry of Justice
- We used this to create a data regression model to identify those young people most at risk of becoming involved in serious crime
- We used our knowledge of providers (capacity and cost) to estimate our reach (i.e. the number of pupils we could afford to support)
- We then used the model to identify the top 500 most at-risk pupils in the city (within the parameters of the SAFE programme) and used this to allocate places to schools
- Schools combined the data with their own knowledge of pupils to identify their SAFE cohort


All of the providers are local to Sheffield, which was designed to enhance the sustainability of this work when the funding ends. This has also supported the approach of bringing providers together to ensure a collaborative (not competitive) approach.

An identified strength of the Sheffield approach has been the quality of the data analysis which has informed decisions and supported place allocation.

The year one allocation is below, with the school names removed. The Sheffield SAFE Taskforce ultimately supported 518 pupils from 34 settings in year one, with around 100 'swaps' due to lack of engagement.



A 'SAFE Champions network' was introduced during year one to broaden communication channels and ensure that communication included those leading the work as well as setting leaders.

Qualitative Evaluation

In addition to the DfE evaluation process (led by RAND), we have commissioned ImpactEd to create and manage a pupil-level survey to provide a baseline and end-point evaluation.

An internal quality assurance model was also developed for the project, led by Sai Patel. This was based on previous Learn Sheffield work and the established skillset of our commissioning lead (who is a former HMI and current Learn Sheffield school improvement partner).

Every participating setting was visited (including talking to school SAFE Champions and pupils) in the summer term of 2023 and this was triangulated by individual QA meetings with each provider.

This process has also driven quality improvement, through both direct feedback and the dissemination of the most effective practice in both settings and providers.

Quotes from pupils #1

It's helping me - I'm not in trouble as much as I was.

Its reyt good. It makes you want to come to school.

I'm now more kind to other people.

It stops me from truanting. Its made me more confident.

I'm calmer now. I'm less anxious. I enjoy coming to school more.

We learn more because sometimes school doesn't teach us about the things that we learn with him like drugs or alcohol or child exploitation. We learn what to do and how to be a good person.

Its good - the lessons are good - you learn stuff about things like knife crime.

I've learnt a lot of stuff that I could go home and talk to my parents with. I'm not the best in school, but this really helped me learn.

I used to think [school] was like a prison, but now I want to learn and I need to be in lessons.

Because when you talk about how you feel you get a lot off your chest. I used to be quite snappy, but now I'm not as snappy.

Before this I always getting angry and getting detentions. He helped me to control this and so now I don't in as much trouble as I used to.

Is the Peak District open at weekends?

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Quotes from pupils #2

It's making me think more on what I need to do before I react to something. I'm getting into less trouble.

I'm starting to rebuild the friendships I ruined by getting angry at people.

I used to be bad - now I'm way better - I haven't had an exclusion this year.

He helps me calm down - breathing techniques and since I started talking to him my behaviour has started to get better.

My head of year and my mum have been saying that they've been seeing an improvement in my behaviour a lot.

I used to out of lessons at lot and getting excluded and now that I'm doing this its easier. They've calmed me down and help keeping me on track.

I've gotten in less trouble since I've started these. I used to get lots of on calls, suspensions and isolations and stuff and that's just gradually stopped.

My behaviour has improved. I come to school more often.

I understand other peoples point of view.

Its made me reflect on my actions a bit more, and so I'm getting into less bother.

I can see a difference from when I wasn't doing this - I'm more in control of my emotions etc.

Before this, I would punch anyone who looked bad at me - I now don't.

I can actually talk to someone and they're not going to judge me.

It's helping me mentally. It helps me with my life. School has got more fun because I know what I'm doing. I enjoy school more than I used to.

They are making me calmer - I can control my anger a lot better.

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The quotes from pupils above are taken from the national board presentation. They provide an insight into the emerging impact, as well as an understanding of how the impact is felt by the young people. It is, at times, also an insight into the lives and experiences of the young people benefiting from this work.

At the time of writing this report we are awaiting the final year one evaluation, but there are some early signs of impact below:

- reductions in suspensions and negative behaviour
- reductions in aggressive behaviour
- some improvement in attendance
- improvements in wellbeing, resilience, confidence etc

Quantitative Evaluation Outcomes

The evaluation approach is set out on the right. A number of outcomes did improve (number of offences, number of inclusion and attendance involvements and MAST / social care episodes) in year one. However, some outcomes got worse across the key measures of attendance, unauthorised absence and exclusions.

Outcomes evaluation methodology

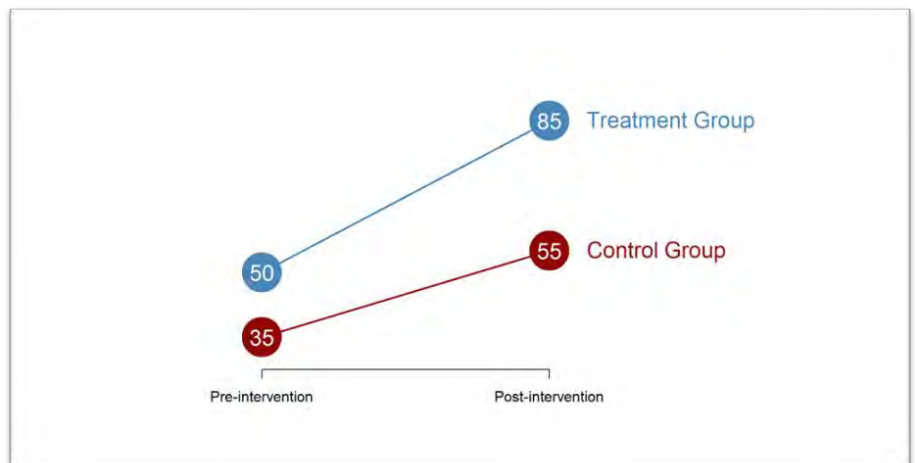
- We want to understand if outcomes improved following a SAFE intervention.
- Attendance and exclusions are of particular interest as well as involvements with other services.
- To do this we look at outcomes in a period 6 months (or 3 half-terms) prior to the start of the intervention and compare these to outcomes in a similar time-frame following the intervention.
- The post-evaluation period begins 3 months after the start of the intervention to allow time for the intervention to have an impact and also to look for a sustained improvement.

There is a problem with just looking at pre and post outcomes for the SAFE cohort in that we do not know what would have happened to attendance if the young person had not received an intervention. In the case of attendance for example, the 'before' period is generally HT (half terms) 1-3 and the 'after' period contains HT5 and HT6. We know that attendance for all young people is worsening over time and also that attendance tends to decline with age so there are other factors that might be having an impact.

In order to more robustly evaluate the impact of SAFE, therefore, it is helpful to compare the outcomes for the SAFE cohort with those of a control group who did not receive a SAFE intervention. The young people who were part of the original allocation and those who dropped out or were referred out can be used to create this control group as they are similar to the pupils who received a SAFE intervention.

The control group, that shares similar characteristics to the SAFE cohort, enables us to analyse the change in outcomes for the control group in the pre and post intervention periods and compare this to the change in outcomes in the SAFE cohort. This is known as 'difference-in-difference' analysis.

This diagram illustrates how this works. In the example the improvement in the treatment group is 35 and the improvement in the control group is 20. This suggests that the treatment group would have seen an improvement of 20 regardless of the intervention. The actual improvement that can be attributed to the intervention is $(35-20) = 15$.



The table on the next page shows the results of the difference-in-difference analysis across all outcome measures. Attendance, for example, worsened for the SAFE cohort following the SAFE intervention (as it did for all pupils) but the analysis suggest that attendance was 8% points higher than it would have been in the absence of the intervention. There was also a significant reduction in referrals to the CME team and a reduction in incidents of serious violence.

Outcome	Control (weighted) before	Control (weighted) after	Change in control (1)	SAFE before	SAFE after	Change in SAFE (2)	Difference-in-difference (2-1)
% attendance (3 HTs)	79.640	65.304	-14.335	80.351	73.976	-6.375	7.960
% unauth. absence (3 HTs)	12.735	23.379	10.644	11.750	15.551	3.801	-6.843
% sessions excluded (3 HTs)	3.251	4.584	1.333	3.158	4.771	1.613	0.280
Avg. no of serious violence offences	0.017	0.015	-0.002	0.015	0.007	-0.009	-0.007
Avg. no of other offences	0.019	0.002	-0.017	0.024	0.007	-0.018	0.000
Avg. no. of referrals to attendance legal	0.064	0.051	-0.013	0.064	0.075	0.011	0.024
Avg. no. of inclusion consultation / advice referrals	0.276	0.372	0.096	0.253	0.253	0.000	-0.096
Avg. no. of inclusion involvements	0.517	0.416	-0.101	0.514	0.382	-0.132	-0.031
Avg. no. of involvements with Autism Service	0.051	0.034	-0.017	0.048	0.022	-0.026	-0.009
Avg. no. of involvements with Ed. Psych.	0.185	0.189	0.005	0.189	0.187	-0.002	-0.007
Avg. no of reduced timetables	0.195	0.208	0.008	0.220	0.222	0.002	-0.006
Avg. no of MAST involvements	0.158	0.150	-0.007	0.149	0.145	-0.004	0.003
Avg. no of CIN episodes	0.258	0.275	0.017	0.224	0.209	-0.015	-0.033
Avg. no of CPP episodes	0.055	0.033	-0.022	0.046	0.031	-0.015	0.007
Avg. no. of involvements with OME team	0.018	0.086	0.068	0.015	0.029	0.013	-0.054
Avg. no of CYT involvements	0.086	0.069	-0.016	0.099	0.088	-0.011	0.005

A summary of the initial year one evaluation findings is below:

- This evaluation has looked at outcomes for pupils participating in SAFE interventions between January 2023 and August 2023.
- In order to isolate the impact of the SAFE interventions, outcomes for young people in the SAFE cohort were compared to similar young people who did not receive an intervention.
- A technique known as propensity score matching was used to create a control group with characteristics very similar to the SAFE cohort.
- Difference-in-difference estimation was then used to estimate the impact of SAFE by removing the effect of changes that may have happened regardless of participation in SAFE.
- Although attendance worsened following the SAFE interventions, the analyses suggest that attendance is higher than it would have been without SAFE.
- Pupils participating in SAFE also had a reduction in offences and a reduction in referrals to other services (inclusion & attendance, children missing education, autism and educational psychology).
- As some of the SAFE interventions continued into the 23/24 academic year it would be helpful to repeat the evaluation at a later point in time when the first cycle of interventions is complete.

Learning for Year Two (and beyond)

Much of the reflection has focused on the engagement challenge for the most at risk students:

- Those most at risk aren't always in school or ready to engage
- The next tier of students are marginally less at risk but more likely to engage
- There are more than 500 in the city cohort who didn't make the shortlist but are at risk, even if the level of risk is lower

We are also reflecting on (and considering how to evaluate) what happens to students after their intervention ends. We are concerned that they may regress given the importance of the relationship between student and mentor, once it has been withdrawn after a longer term intervention.

Feedback from settings makes it clear that schools like the diversity of providers and are developing a growing understanding of what type of intervention will have the greatest impact on pupils with different needs. We believe that this understanding can be the basis of a longer term approach beyond the project.

We are also clear that relationships and clear communication are essential. SAFE Champions are proving to be a crucial tool in ensuring that the impact of interventions are realised.

The pupil survey has been redesigned to improve the response rates this year so we can benefit from the learning this brings to the evidence base.

The Taksforce is also starting to consider how can we create an enduring and sustainable legacy to SAFE. There is some appetite for a centralised service in the future, but schools can't afford the costs of high-quality interventions. This may also link to a move away from alternative provision to a SAFE-type of approach (in-school).

The year two allocation is below, with the school names removed. The Sheffield SAFE Taskforce plans to support 576 pupils from 32 settings in year two. The larger number reflects a decision by the Taskforce to allocate some underspend (from the slightly delayed start) to additional places.



Next steps

We will circulate the final year one evaluation report once it is published and take any follow up questions from the partnership. The next update (perhaps in December 2024) would focus on the year two evaluation and emerging plans for a post SAFE landscape that embeds the learning from the project. This will be a crucial time for this work, as evaluation at that point will be based on a significantly longer period of interventions and therefore provide an evidence base on which to base longer term decisions.