

# CHOICES PROGRAMME

## EVALUATION REPORT



### Primary Prevention Violence Reduction Initiative

Hampshire & Isle of Wight

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Commissioned by **Artsworld**

Funded By **Hampshire  
& Isle of Wight Violence  
Reduction Unit**

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Prepared by

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March 2026

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### Author Statement

This evaluation was conducted independently by Kirsty Sulston. The author was responsible for research design, data collection, analysis and reporting. Findings and recommendations are based on the evidence gathered and reflect the independent professional judgement of the evaluator.

# CONTENTS

<b>1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b>	<b>2</b>
OVERVIEW	
EVALUATION APPROACH	
HEADLINE FINDINGS	
OVERALL CONCLUSION	
PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS	
STRATEGIC POSITION	
<b>2. INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>5</b>
2.1 PROGRAMME OVERVIEW	
2.2 EVALUATION OBJECTIVES	
<b>3. METHODOLOGY</b>	<b>6</b>
3.1 ORIGINAL EVALUATION DESIGN	
3.2 METHODOLOGICAL ADAPTATION	
3.3 DATA SOURCES	
3.4 LIMITATIONS	
3.5 EVALUATION FRAMEWORK	
<b>4. PROGRAMME REACH AND INVESTMENT</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>5. CASE STUDIES: OBSERVED PRIMARY SCHOOL DELIVERY</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>6. MECHANISMS OF CHANGE</b>	<b>13</b>
6.1 AGENCY THROUGH REHEARSAL	
6.2 BELONGING AND PEER INFLUENCE	
6.3 TRUSTED ADULTS AND HELP-SEEKING	
6.4 CREATIVE ENGAGEMENT AS A PREVENTATIVE TOOL	
<b>7. EMERGING IMPACT THEMES</b>	<b>16</b>
7.1 INCREASED SELF-AWARENESS	
7.2 EMPATHY DEVELOPMENT	
7.3 ENGAGEMENT OF UNEXPECTED PUPILS	
7.4 SAFEGUARDING ACTIVATION	
7.5 TEACHER CONFIDENCE	
7.6 TEACHER REPORTED IMPACT (SURVEY FINDINGS)	
7.7 TEACHER CONFIDENCE AS PREVENTATIVE TOOL	
<b>8. LEGACY AND SUSTAINABILITY</b>	<b>18</b>
8.1 EVIDENCE OF EMBEDDING	
8.2 TRANSFER BETWEEN SCHOOLS	
8.3 STRUCTURAL DELIVERY CONSTRAINTS	
<b>9. AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>10. CONCLUSION</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>11. RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	<b>20</b>

# 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Overview

Choices is a Violence Reduction Unit-funded primary prevention programme delivered by Artswork across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight between 2023-2025, with a six-month extension until March 2026. The programme combines teacher CPD, classroom-based learning and two-session Forum Theatre workshops delivered by Bearface Theatre to support pupils in Years 6 and 7 to explore peer influence, belonging, risk and decision-making. Its core aim is preventative: to reduce young people's risk of becoming victims or perpetrators of serious violence by strengthening agency, critical thinking, emotional literacy and awareness of trusted adults.

Across the two-year programme and six-month extension, Choices has reached:

- **104** schools
- **9,448** pupils
- **11** rounds of pupil workshops
- At a total investment of **£360,000** (£38.10 per pupil)

## Evaluation approach

This evaluation adopted a mixed-method design, including:

- Observation of four workshops across two primary schools
- Teacher survey responses
- Interviews with Artswork, Bearface Theatre and VRU representatives
- Documentary review and logic model analysis
- Quantitative participation data

Although the planned deep-dive secondary school withdrew, methodology was adapted to preserve direct observation of delivery and broaden insight across multiple settings.

## Headline findings

### 1. Evidence of short-term impact

Observation and teacher testimony indicate credible short-term indicators of change in:

- Increased pupil awareness of peer pressure and belonging dynamics
- Improved articulation of trusted adults and help-seeking pathways
- Strengthened empathy and emotional literacy
- Engagement of pupils who may not respond to traditional classroom methods

A safeguarding disclosure was reported immediately following one observed workshop, suggesting that the programme may lower short-term barriers to help-seeking.



## 2. Creative methodology as a core delivery strength

Forum Theatre provides a mechanism for rehearsing difficult decisions safely, enabling pupils to explore consequences without personal exposure. This aligns directly with the programme's preventative intent. Stakeholder interviews confirm that the programme was designed to develop thinking practice rather than deliver prescriptive instruction - an approach consistent with evidence-informed pedagogy.

## 3. Strategic alignment with VRU priorities



The programme aligns strongly with VRU intentions to:

- Strengthen young people's ability to recognise risk
- Encourage informed decision-making
- Promote access to trusted adults
- Disrupt risk trajectories early

As a universal primary intervention, Choices does not target identified offenders but seeks to reduce vulnerability factors at scale.

## 4. Sustainability and evidence capture as core challenges

The principal weaknesses identified are structural rather than pedagogical:

- Inconsistent evaluation data capture due to school capacity pressures
- Variable embedding of teacher training into ongoing practice
- Reliance on individual staff champions
- Difficulty evidencing longer-term behavioural change within funding cycles

These challenges were raised directly in VRU interviews and are reflected in historical evaluation gaps.

## Overall conclusion

Choices is a strategically aligned, evidence-informed primary prevention programme operating at scale and at relatively low per-pupil cost.

This evaluation finds credible evidence of short-term attitudinal and relational shifts consistent with its intended outcomes. While long-term violence reduction cannot be measured within this timeframe, the programme demonstrates strong alignment with preventative theory and stakeholder intent.

The primary development need is not redesign of content, but strengthening of sustainability mechanisms and impact measurement.

## Priority recommendations

To strengthen commissioning resilience and long-term impact, the evaluation recommends:

1. Embedding simple, mandatory impact measurement at the point of delivery
2. Formalising and measuring trusted adult and help-seeking outcomes more explicitly
3. Improving integration between teacher CPD and theatre delivery strands
4. Engaging school leadership more directly to secure embedding beyond individual staff members
5. Strategically targeting high-need contexts while maintaining universal reach

Addressing these areas would significantly strengthen both preventative impact and the programme's long term funding case.

## Strategic position

Choices represents a credible, scalable early intervention model. With strengthened data capture and embedding mechanisms, it is well positioned to continue contributing to violence reduction strategy across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight.

Overall, this evaluation finds that Choices delivers credible short-term outcomes consistent with effective primary prevention practice. The programme demonstrates strong engagement with young people, particularly through its creative Forum Theatre methodology, and aligns well with Violence Reduction Unit priorities around early intervention, belonging and informed decision-making. With strengthened impact measurement and clearer embedding mechanisms within schools, the programme has strong potential to continue contributing to regional violence reduction strategy.



## 2. INTRODUCTION

### 2.1 Programme overview

Choices was developed in response to rising youth violence across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. Over 10,000 crimes involving under-19s were recorded in one year across the region.

The programme combines:

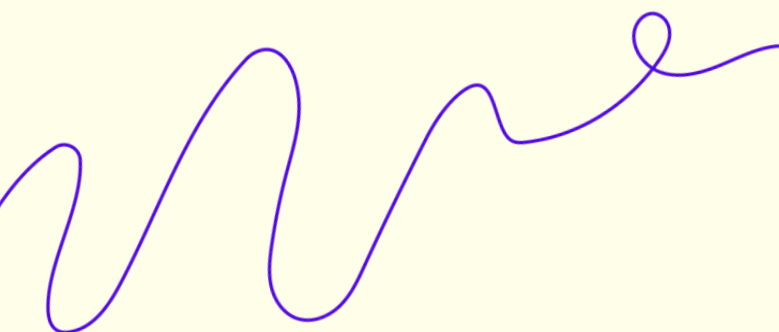
- Teacher CPD rooted in philosophy for children, enquiry-based learning and trauma informed practice
- Teacher-led classroom sessions
- Two-session Forum Theatre workshops

It is designed to sit within the transition between primary and secondary school - a point identified as particularly vulnerable due to peer influence and risk-taking behaviours.

### 2.2 Evaluation objectives

This evaluation addresses:

- What has changed?
- Who has benefitted and how?
- What is the legacy?
- What could be improved?



## 3. METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Original evaluation design

The original evaluation design intended to include a deep dive within one secondary school, combining:

- Direct observation of pupil workshops
- In-depth interviews with pupils
- Interviews with teaching staff
- Quantitative participation data



This approach would have enabled detailed insight within a single setting.

### 3.2 Methodological adaptation

Shortly before the planned fieldwork, the identified secondary school withdrew from the programme. Given delivery timelines and safeguarding protocols, a like-for-like replacement could not be secured within the evaluation timeframe.

Rather than reduce the scope of insight, the methodology was adapted to preserve direct observation of delivery quality and pupil engagement. The revised approach included:

- Observation of both Bearface Theatre workshops at two different primary schools
- Structured observational analysis using a detailed evaluation framework
- Development and distribution of a short online survey to schools involved in the programme over the course of the whole programme.

The adaptation ensured that:

- Both workshop formats were observed in full
- Delivery practice could be examined across more than one setting
- Broader retrospective insight into sustained impact could be gathered from schools with prior experience of the programme



While the change reduced the opportunity for in-depth pupil interviews within a single secondary setting, the revised design broadened the evidence base and maintained alignment with the original evaluation objectives.

### 3.3 Data sources

The evaluation draws on multiple qualitative and quantitative sources in order to triangulate findings and ensure robustness.

## Direct observation

Observation of pupil workshops at Shirley Junior School (5 February 2026) and Woodcot Primary School (6 February 2026).

Structured observation was conducted using a detailed evaluation framework designed to assess:

- Engagement and participation
- Youth voice and agency
- Protective factors (VRU lens)
- Creative mechanisms of change
- Short-term outcome indicators
- Signals towards longer-term impact

Observations focused not only on content delivery but on relational dynamics, behavioural shifts, and safeguarding indicators.

## Teacher insight

- Informal “corridor” interview with Year 6 teacher at Woodcot Primary (6 February 2026)  
Online teacher survey distributed to 27 schools involved in the programme across its delivery period. A total of six teachers from six schools responded, representing primary, secondary and SEN settings. A small number of additional staff indicated that they did not complete the survey as they felt their feedback had already been provided through previous evaluation processes and programme feedback channels.

These sources provide practitioner insight into:

- Behavioural and attitudinal shifts
- Safeguarding disclosures
- Long-term memory retention
- Embedding of learning into classroom practice

## Practitioner and delivery partner interviews

- Face-to-face interview with Kate Hadley, Creative Director and Jessie, Facilitator at Bearface Theatre (5 February 2026)
- Online interviews with Artswork staff:
  - Annabel Cook, Deputy Chief Executive and Angela Goswell, Customer Relations & Admin Lead (9 January 2026)
  - Lesley Wood, Lead Trainer/Consultant & Learning Development and Quality Manager (16 January 2026)

- Online interviews with Violence Reduction Unit representatives:
  - Eleanor Snookes, former Manager at VRU (15 January 2026)
  - Jim Pegler, Director and Fiona Sullivan, Manager at VRU (10 February 2026)

The interviews explored:

- Programme intent and theory
- Strategic alignment with VRU priorities
- Delivery model strengths and challenges
- Integration between training and workshop strands
- Legacy and sustainability

### Quantitative data

- Attendance data
- Engagement metrics
- Teacher self-ratings (via a survey conducted by Artswork)

### Document review

The evaluation also included review and reflection against:

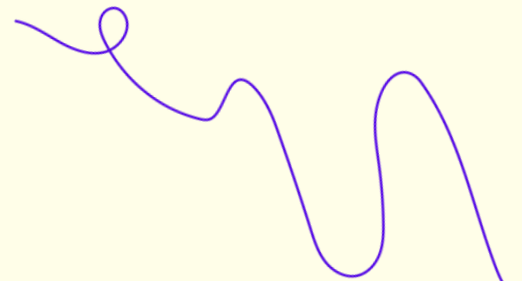
- The programme Logic Model
- Theory of Change
- Previous evaluation findings
- Commission brief objectives

This enabled assessment of alignment between intended and observed outcomes.

## 3.4 Limitations

- Loss of the planned secondary deep dive limited longitudinal pupil voice
- Survey findings rely on self-reported teacher data, meaning findings are perception based
- No long-term behavioural tracking data is available

Despite these limitations, the use of multiple qualitative and quantitative data sources allowed for triangulation of findings across observation, practitioner insight and survey responses. This strengthens confidence that the themes identified represent consistent patterns across delivery contexts rather than isolated observations.



## 3.5 Evaluation framework

This evaluation assesses the Choices programme through a primary prevention lens, focusing on the extent to which delivery demonstrates credible indicators associated with early-stage violence prevention.

Analysis draws on four key dimensions:

### Reach and accessibility

The scale and demographic breadth of programme delivery.

### Quality of engagement

The extent to which creative methods successfully engage pupils, including those who may not respond to traditional classroom approaches.

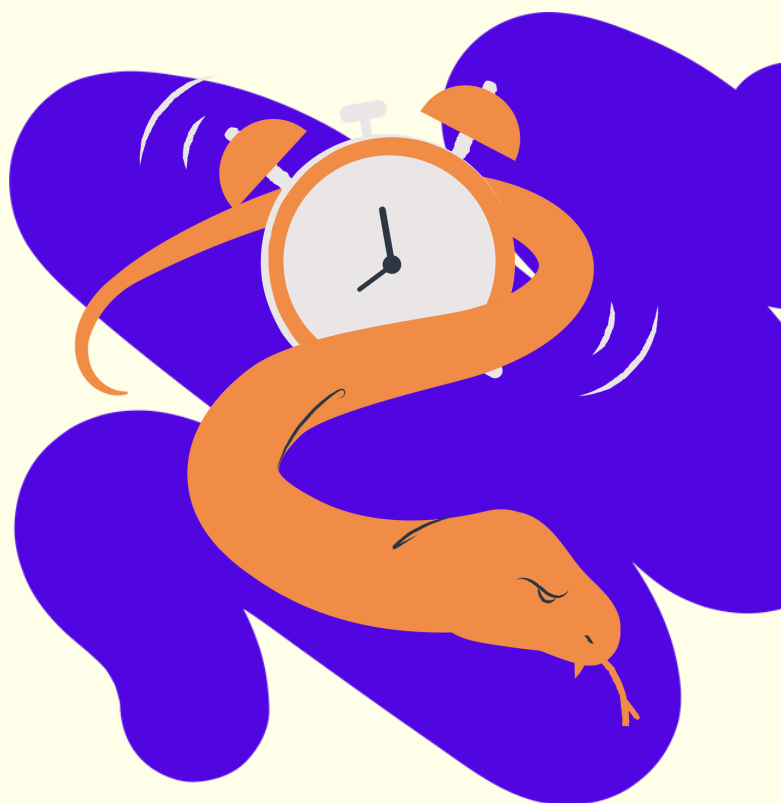
### Protective factors and mechanisms of change

Evidence that delivery strengthens factors associated with reduced vulnerability to exploitation or violence, including agency, belonging and awareness of trusted adults.

### Sustainability and system integration

The extent to which programme learning embeds within school practice and contributes to longer-term preventative infrastructure.

Findings throughout the report are interpreted against these dimensions.



## 4. PROGRAMME REACH AND INVESTMENT

Across the original two-year programme plus six-month extension:

- Total schools reached: **104**
- Total pupils reached: **9,448**
- Delivery rounds of pupil workshops: **11**
- Total programme investment: **£360,000**



### Cost per pupil

$£360,000 \div 9,448 \text{ pupils} = £38.10 \text{ per pupil}$

When considered against the significantly higher downstream costs associated with youth offending, exclusion and safeguarding interventions, this positions Choices as a relatively low-cost preventative intervention.

VRU representatives emphasised that demonstrating impact through data is increasingly critical for future commissioning.

Teacher survey findings, while self-reported, provide:

- Multi-school corroboration of observed impact
- Evidence of perceived value
- Insight into professional learning outcomes

However, improving response rates and embedding data collection at point of delivery will strengthen future funding resilience.



## 5. CASE STUDIES: OBSERVED PRIMARY SCHOOL DELIVERY

### Case study 1: Shirley Junior School - Observation of workshop 2 (Year 6)

#### Engagement and psychological safety

Despite high initial energy and environmental disruption (wet coats, rainy day), the group settled quickly. The majority had participated in Workshop 1 two days prior, enabling direct continuity.

Facilitators used:

- Character hot-seating
- Music to explore personality
- Writing exercises
- Metaphor (Wolf and Sheep analogy)



A notable moment occurred when Buddy lifted the mask - previously lively pupils became silent and attentive. This indicates strong emotional engagement through theatrical framing.

#### Agency and reflection

Pupils were asked at the beginning and end:

“I feel confident making my own choices, even when my friends are making different choices.”

At the end of the session 5 pupils disagreed and similar number selected “don’t know”.

This suggests honest self-reflection rather than performative agreement.

Pupils asked nuanced questions of the character, including:

“Would you betray Buddy?”

“Where are your family now?”

These reflect empathy and contextual thinking.

#### Creative mechanism of change

The use of metaphor (Wolf/Sheep), music and embodied rehearsal enabled:

- Emotional distancing
- Safe exploration of exploitation
- Collective discussion without personal exposure

Creativity was not decorative - it was the mechanism of engagement.



## Case study 2: Woodcot Primary School - Observation of workshop 1+2 (Year 6)

### Engagement of vulnerable pupils

One pupil described by the teacher as potentially disruptive and “suspected ADHD” was cast as Joe. This spotlight transformed his engagement. Rather than disrupt, he became central to the learning process.

The teacher reported he:

- Remained engaged
- Continued discussing workshop content afterwards
- Displayed behaviour not typical in standard classroom settings

Another pupil described as “usually very quiet” spoke confidently in whole-group discussion and later approached staff during break to describe the workshop as “insightful.”

A pupil labelled by staff as a “follower” engaged thoughtfully and shared reflections publicly.

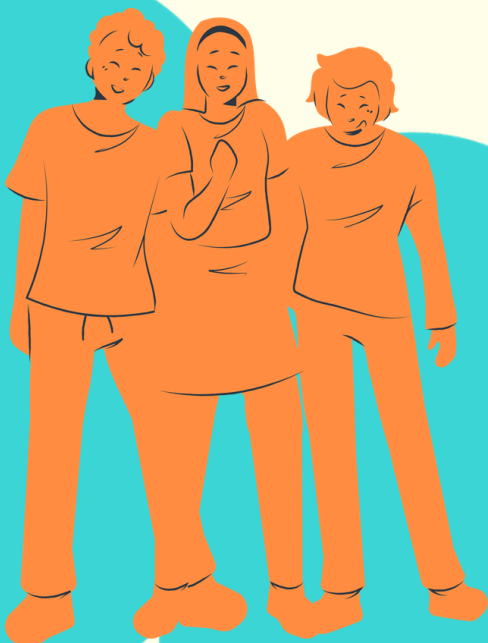
### Safeguarding impact

A teacher reported that a disclosure was made directly following the workshop content. This represents immediate safeguarding activation - an indicator of psychological safety and trust.

### Longitudinal signal

The same teacher described previous Year 6 pupils (now Year 7) who had taken part in the project the year previous, returning to school to say they had chosen not to engage in risky behaviours because they “would get into trouble.”

This suggests sustained memory and behavioural rehearsal impact beyond the immediate session.



## 6. MECHANISMS OF CHANGE

From the practitioner interview, the core mechanisms of change include:

- Belonging as emotional driver
- Agency through rehearsal rather than instruction
- Positive spotlighting of disengaged pupils
- Embodied learning strengthening memory retention

Bearface emphasised that Choices is about:

Exploring why choices are made, not just what the “right” choice is.

Forum Theatre allows pupils to “rehearse” difficult scenarios safely - a protective rehearsal for real life.

They also identified a structural tension:

- Workshop delivery is strong and responsive
- Integration with teacher training varies across schools

This has implications for legacy and embedding.

### 6.1 Agency through rehearsal

From inception, the programme was designed not to instruct young people what to do, but to develop their thinking practice.

The core intention was:

To empower young people to make informed decisions through higher-level thinking skills and rehearsal of real-life scenarios.

Forum Theatre allows young people to:

- Explore consequences
- Pause and re-run scenarios
- Try alternative outcomes



This aligns with VRU's intent that young people should understand they have a choice in difficult situations.

### 6.2 Belonging and peer influence

Artwork identified belonging as central to risky behaviour pathways.

Observations confirmed pupils becoming aware of how peer pressure shapes decisions.

Notably, pupils who initially claimed independent decision-making later expressed uncertainty, demonstrating increased self-awareness.

## 6.3 Trusted adults and help-seeking

Identification of trusted adults and understanding when and how to seek help were articulated by the Violence Reduction Unit as key short-term intended outcomes of the programme. These outcomes sit at the heart of primary prevention, equipping young people with the relational awareness and confidence needed to navigate potentially unsafe situations.

### Evidence of conceptual understanding

Across observed workshops, pupils demonstrated the ability to identify appropriate trusted adults. During Workshop 1 at Woodcot Primary School, when asked who could be considered a trusted adult, pupils named:

- Family members
- Sisters (over the age of 18)
- School teachers
- ChildLine



Similarly, at Shirley Junior School, the concept of trusted adults formed one of three core reflective anchors in the session, alongside friendship and aspirations. Pupils engaged readily in discussion and were able to articulate who they might approach if concerned about themselves or others.

This indicates that, at point of delivery, pupils understood the concept of trusted adults and were able to generate safeguarding-appropriate responses.

### Evidence of help-seeking behaviour

At Woodcot Primary School, a teacher reported that a pupil made a disclosure directly following the workshop. While causality cannot be definitively attributed, the temporal proximity suggests that the workshop created sufficient psychological safety and contextual framing for a pupil to speak up. The teacher described this as a positive and immediate impact of the programme, noting that the disclosure was at an early stage and that the school was able to intervene appropriately. This represents a meaningful short-term indicator that:

- Pupils may feel safer initiating conversations following the session
- The fictional framing (Buddy and Joe) lowers barriers to discussing real experiences
- Help-seeking pathways are made more visible and accessible

### Alignment with intended outcomes

These findings align with the programme's short-term outcome framework, which identified success as young people being able to:

- Identify a trusted adult
- Recognise when something does not feel right
- Seek support or choose not to engage in risky behaviour

### Alignment with intended outcomes

This evaluation does not include longitudinal tracking of help-seeking behaviour, nor does it measure changes in safeguarding reporting rates across schools. As such, it cannot evidence sustained behavioural change over time.

However, within the scope of a primary prevention intervention, the following short-term indicators are present:

- Clear conceptual understanding of trusted adults
- Observed articulation of appropriate support pathways
- Immediate safeguarding disclosure following delivery
- Teacher reinforcement of help-seeking language beyond the workshop setting



Taken together, these findings suggest that Choices contributes meaningfully to pupils' awareness of support networks and their confidence to seek help when needed, at least in the immediate and short-term context of delivery.

## 6.4 Creative engagement as preventative tool

VRU representatives emphasised the value of using an evidence-based creative method rather than classroom lecture.

Primary intervention benefits from creative engagement because:

- It increases retention
- It enables empathy
- It supports embodied memory

The Choices film reinforces this: “By pulling it up onto its feet, it stores somewhere else in the brain.”



## 7. EMERGING IMPACT THEMES

### 7.1 Increased self-awareness

Observed in:

- Shifts in pupil confidence responses
- Recognition of peer influence
- Reflections on “mask” metaphor



### 7.2 Empathy development

The mask reveal moment created emotional reframing - pupils shifting from “scary” to “scared” interpretations.

### 7.3 Engagement of unexpected pupils

Teachers repeatedly expressed surprise at which pupils engaged most deeply - including those typically disengaged.

### 7.4 Safeguarding activation

Immediate disclosure post-workshop suggests psychological safety and real-world application.

### 7.5 Teacher confidence

Teachers reported increased confidence using creative tools and trauma-informed approaches. However, VRU interviews indicate teacher embedding did not always sustain due to school capacity constraints.

### 7.6 Teacher-reported impact (survey findings)

In addition to observed workshops and stakeholder interviews, teacher survey responses provide practitioner insight into perceived impact across schools involved in the programme. A short online survey was distributed to participating schools as part of this evaluation, with 13 responses received from six teachers across primary, secondary and SEN settings. While response numbers were modest, the responses provide useful practitioner insight into how the programme has been experienced across different contexts.

Teachers consistently reported that:

- Pupils were highly engaged with the theatre-based format.
- The fictional framing (Buddy and Joe) allowed pupils to discuss sensitive issues without personal exposure.
- The programme supported discussions around peer pressure, belonging and risk in ways that felt developmentally appropriate.
- Workshops were memorable and referenced later in classroom discussions.

Teachers described the sessions as:

- “Memorable”
- “Insightful”
- “Engaging for pupils who wouldn’t usually engage”
- “Valuable for tricky cohorts”



These findings align strongly with observation data at Woodcot Primary School and Shirley Junior School, where teachers independently referenced:

- Vulnerable pupils engaging unexpectedly
- Pupils consciously reflecting on their own choices after sessions
- Disclosure made as a direct result of workshop content

- Enabled pupils to consider consequences
- Strengthened understanding of trusted adults
- Provided language to discuss difficult situations

This supports the short-term outcome framework identified by the VRU - namely the ability to:

- Identify trusted adults
- Recognise unsafe situations
- Understand that they have a choice in difficult contexts

## 7.7 Teacher confidence and professional learning

Survey responses indicate that teachers valued the creative methodology and reported increased confidence in facilitating discussions about:

Notably, teachers emphasised that the programme:

- Peer pressure
- Risk-taking
- Belonging
- Difficult conversations



This mirrors findings from the Artswork interview, where the intended legacy was embedding approaches so deeply that they become “part and parcel” of school culture. However, teacher survey responses and stakeholder interviews also reinforce a tension:

- Teachers value the programme highly
- Capacity to complete evaluation processes or embed long-term follow-up is constrained by workload pressures.

This reflects broader VRU concerns about evaluation and data capture sustainability.

## 8. LEGACY AND SUSTAINABILITY

### 8.1 Evidence of embedding

Teacher survey responses indicate that:

- Workshop language is referenced in day-to-day teaching
- Characters (Buddy and Joe) provide a depersonalised framework for discussing behaviour
- Messages about making informed choices are revisited beyond the session

This is supported by Woodcot Primary School teacher testimony that previous pupils (now Year 7) explicitly referenced Choices when explaining why they were not engaging in risky behaviours.

Such recall suggests more than short-term recall - it indicates:

- Narrative retention
- Internalised framing of consequences
- Continued behavioural self-regulation

### 8.2 Transfer between schools

There is evidence of teacher-led transfer of the programme, where a PSHE lead who experienced Choices at one school subsequently engaged a new school in the programme. This demonstrates organic spread and perceived value.

### 8.3 Structural delivery constraints

Despite strong qualitative endorsement, survey and interview data reinforce:

- Evaluation return rates are difficult to secure due to school pressures
- Sustainability depends heavily on individual champions
- Engagement varies depending on leadership and context

The voluntary nature of school participation remains a structural challenge.

## 9. AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT

- Stronger integration between teacher CPD and workshop strand
- More structured follow-up mechanisms
- Improved evaluation data collection at point of delivery
- Consider smaller group adaptations for higher-need cohorts 15
- Clarify film resource's role in sustaining impact



## 10. CONCLUSION

This evaluation set out to examine what has changed as a result of Choices, who has benefitted, the extent of its legacy, and where improvements could be made.

Evidence from observation, teacher feedback and stakeholder interviews indicates that Choices delivers meaningful short-term impact in the following areas:

- Increased pupil awareness of peer influence and belonging
- Strengthened ability to identify trusted adults
- Improved confidence discussing difficult or risky situations
- Engagement of pupils who may not typically respond to traditional classroom approaches
- Creation of psychologically safe spaces that may lower barriers to disclosure

At scale, the programme has reached **9,448** pupils across **104** schools at a cost of approximately £38 per pupil. Within the context of primary violence prevention, this represents relatively low-cost early intervention.

The evaluation cannot evidence direct reductions in violence or long-term behavioural change within the available timeframe. However, findings align strongly with the programme's intended short-term and medium term outcomes: equipping young people with critical thinking skills, rehearsed decision-making processes, and clearer help-seeking pathways.

Stakeholder interviews confirm that the programme was intentionally designed as a preventative intervention rather than a reactive response, with Forum Theatre selected as an evidence-informed methodology capable of engaging young people experientially.

Structural challenges identified relate primarily to sustainability and data capture rather than delivery quality. School capacity pressures and inconsistent evaluation returns have limited the strength of impact evidence available to commissioners.

Overall, Choices represents a strategically aligned and operationally effective primary prevention programme. Evidence gathered through observation, practitioner insight and teacher feedback indicates credible short term impact consistent with the programme's preventative aims. With strengthened impact measurement and clearer embedding mechanisms, the programme is well positioned to continue contributing to violence reduction strategy across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight.



# 11. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations respond directly to findings from workshop observations, teacher survey responses and stakeholder interviews. They are designed to strengthen sustainability, evidencing of impact and strategic alignment with Violence Reduction Unit priorities.

## 11.1 Strengthen systematic capture of workshop feedback

The programme already includes strong reflective practice within delivery. Facilitators ask pupils at the beginning and end of workshops whether they feel confident making their own choices, and the programme film demonstrates the value of capturing pupil reflections about how the scenarios resonate with real-life situations.

However, during the evaluation it was not always clear how these insights were consistently recorded or fed back into Artswork's wider evidence base. Strengthening the systematic capture and submission of this feedback would improve the ability to evidence short-term outcomes and support ongoing programme learning.

Artswork could embed a simple, standardised process within school workshop delivery that ensures key feedback is routinely recorded and shared. This could include:

- **A short teacher feedback form** completed immediately after the pupil workshop before facilitators leave the school, capturing teacher observations of pupil engagement, relevance to the school context, and any immediate reflections on participation.
- **Systematic recording of the existing pupil confidence question** 'Are you confident making your own choices?' asked at the beginning and end of sessions, with results submitted so they can be collated across schools.
- **Capture of one or two anonymised pupil reflections** from workshop discussions, building on the strong qualitative insight demonstrated in the programme film and allowing similar insight to inform ongoing evaluation.

Data collection should be framed clearly to participating schools as an integral part of programme delivery and safeguarding-informed learning, supporting both continuous improvement and the programme's long-term sustainability.

## 11.2 Strengthen and formalise the "Trusted adult and help-seeking" outcome

Identification of trusted adults and understanding when to seek help were central intended outcomes, and this evaluation identified credible short-term indicators including a disclosure made immediately following workshop delivery.

**Recommendation** - Make this outcome more explicit and measurable by:

- Incorporating a structured reflection in Workshop 2 where pupils identify a trusted adult
- Providing teachers with a short follow-up discussion template to revisit help-seeking language several weeks later
- Encouraging anonymised recording of whether workshop content prompted safeguarding conversations

This would strengthen causal links between programme content and protective behaviours.

### 11.3 Improve integration between teacher training and workshop delivery

Bearface identified variable reinforcement between workshops and inconsistent integration with the teacher CPD strand. Observations suggest the strongest impact occurs where teachers actively reference and embed the material.

#### Recommendation:

- Introduce a brief joint alignment process between teachers and facilitators before delivery
- Provide a concise reinforcement guide for teachers following each workshop
- Clarify shared pedagogical language between CPD and workshop strands

Stronger integration would reduce reliance on individual teacher champions and increase consistency across settings.

### 11.4 Embed engagement at school leadership level

School engagement and sustainability were identified as structural challenges, and long-term legacy depends on embedding beyond individual staff members.

#### Recommendation:

- Position Choices within safeguarding and school improvement priorities when engaging schools
- Communicate impact findings directly to Senior Leadership Teams
- Provide a short annual impact summary that schools can use for Ofsted and safeguarding documentation



Leadership-level buy-in increases resilience to staff turnover and workload pressures.

### 11.5 Prioritise delivery in higher-need and identified hotspot contexts

During the extension phase, schools were more deliberately targeted using local violence data. This approach aligns with the Violence Reduction Unit's wider place-based prevention strategy, which identifies specific geographic hotspot areas where preventative work with young people is likely to be most beneficial. However, these contexts often experience additional systemic pressures that can affect engagement, attendance and capacity within schools.

#### Recommendation:

- Continue collaboration with the VRU, police and local partnership teams to identify priority schools within recognised hotspot areas
- Develop a clear targeting rationale that sets out how limited delivery capacity is strategically directed towards schools where preventative work is most needed
- Where delivery is focused in higher-need settings, consider piloting adapted delivery models (for example smaller group sizes or additional facilitator support) to enable stronger engagement

Targeting delivery in this way will strengthen alignment with the VRU's wider prevention framework while ensuring the programme's resources are deployed where they are most likely to generate preventative value.

## 11.6 Clarify and realign long-term outcome expectations

The evaluation highlights the inherent challenge of evidencing direct reductions in violence within short funding cycles, particularly for preventative programmes delivered through relatively brief school-based interventions. While Choices clearly engages pupils in meaningful reflection around decision-making, peer influence and help-seeking, attributing long-term reductions in violent behaviour to a single intervention is not methodologically robust within the timeframe available.

### Recommendation:

Frame long-term success indicators around sustained preventative influence within school environments, for example:

- Continued teacher use or embedding of workshop approaches or language in classroom discussions
- Ongoing reference by pupils to the concepts explored in the sessions (e.g. decision making, trusted adults, navigating peer pressure)
- Repeat bookings or organic spread between schools, indicating perceived value and relevance within local education networks

Position Choices clearly as a foundational early intervention that contributes to a wider violence-prevention ecosystem by strengthening protective factors such as decision-making awareness, peer reflection and help seeking behaviours.

Framing impact in this way will strengthen the programme's preventative credibility while avoiding over claiming direct reductions in violence, which are influenced by multiple factors beyond the scope of a short form intervention.

### Strategic conclusion

Choices demonstrates:

- Strong qualitative evidence of short-term attitudinal and relational shifts
- Alignment with primary prevention priorities
- Low cost per pupil relative to downstream intervention
- Positive endorsement from teachers and delivery partners

### Future development should prioritise:

1. Stronger embedded data capture
2. Clearer integration between CPD and workshop strands
3. Leadership-level engagement for sustainability
4. Strategically targeted deployment in higher-risk contexts

Addressing these areas will significantly strengthen both preventative impact and commissioning resilience.

