

# Conflict resolution, peer mediation and young people's relationships

Review conducted by the Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) school-based Review Group

---

Report written by Jo Garcia, Jennifer Sinclair, Kelly Dickson, James Thomas,  
Jeff Brunton, Marc Tidd and the PSHE Review Group

---

EPPI-Centre  
Social Science Research Unit  
Institute of Education  
University of London

---

Report no. 1406R · April 2006

The results of this systematic review are available in four formats:

**SUMMARY**

Explains the purpose of the review and the main messages from the research evidence

**REPORT**

Describes the background and the findings of the review(s) but without full technical details of the methods used

**TECHNICAL  
REPORT**

Includes the background, main findings, and full technical details of the review

**DATABASES**

Access to codings describing each research study included in the review

These can be downloaded or accessed at <http://eppi.ioe.ac.uk/reel/>

The EPPI-Centre reference number for this report is 1406R.

This report should be cited as:

Garcia J, Sinclair J, Dickson K, Thomas J, Brunton J, Tidd M, the PSHE Review Group (2006) Conflict resolution, peer mediation and young people's relationships. Report. In: *Research Evidence in Education Library*. London: EPPI-Centre, Social Science Research Unit, Institute of Education, University of London.

© Copyright

Authors of the systematic reviews on the EPPI-Centre website (<http://eppi.ioe.ac.uk/>) hold the copyright for the text of their reviews. The EPPI-Centre owns the copyright for all material on the website it has developed, including the contents of the databases, manuals, and keywording and data extraction systems. The centre and authors give permission for users of the site to display and print the contents of the site for their own non-commercial use, providing that the materials are not modified, copyright and other proprietary notices contained in the materials are retained, and the source of the material is cited clearly following the citation details provided. Otherwise users are not permitted to duplicate, reproduce, re-publish, distribute, or store material from this website without express written permission.

## CONTENTS

Summary . . . . .	1
<b>Chapter 1 Background.</b> . . . .	<b>2</b>
<i>Aims of the review</i> . . . . .	2
<i>Review question</i> . . . . .	2
<i>The review group</i> . . . . .	2
<i>Policy and research context</i> . . . . .	2
<i>User involvement</i> . . . . .	5
<b>Chapter 2 Methods of the review</b> . . . . .	<b>6</b>
<i>Review Methods</i> . . . . .	7
<b>Chapter 3 What research was found?</b> . . . . .	<b>8</b>
<b>Chapter 4 What were the findings of the studies?</b> . . . . .	<b>9</b>
<i>Strengths and limitations</i> . . . . .	10
<i>Implications for policy and practice</i> . . . . .	11
<i>Implications for research</i> . . . . .	11
<b>Chapter 5 Implications</b> . . . . .	<b>11</b>
References . . . . .	13



# Summary

## **Who wants to know and what do they want to know?**

Pupils and teachers at Hatch End High School, Harrow, chose 'relationships' as the topic for this review. They wanted to know what schools could do to improve young people's relationships with each other, with teachers and with their families. This is a key question for schools, policy-makers and pressure groups; there are currently programmes and initiatives on behaviour, citizenship, healthy schools and many other areas which have relationships at their core. Within that broad area, the team looked in more detail at school programmes that encourage conflict resolution and peer mediation.

## **What did we find?**

We found evidence of some benefits for pupils of school interventions in conflict resolution, negotiation skills and peer mediation. Programmes that were studied were quite varied and included classroom based versus whole school initiatives; lessons delivered by teachers versus the use of outside staff; training integrated into academic curricula versus use of the social and personal education area; and use of peer mediation in some programmes. Studies tended to measure the effects that were 'closest' to the intervention - views about conflict, understanding of what had been taught - rather than longer

term and more 'distant' effects, such as pupils' confidence and ability to make better relationships. The programme that used teaching within an academic curriculum had good results. Some studies looked at the impact on reports of disciplinary incidents in schools and found a positive but limited impact.

## **How did we get these results?**

First we looked for research in secondary schools about young people's relationships and found a very varied set of studies. Within those, we chose a small set of studies that addressed the question:

*Do planned educational interventions in conflict resolution skills, negotiation skills and peer mediation improve young people's personal and social relationships?*

We put together the results of 10 studies from USA, Canada and Australia. All were published after 1994 and all compared the results for pupils in these programmes with pupils not in the programmes.

## **What are the implications?**

These are promising interventions that deserve to be rigorously tested in UK schools.



## CHAPTER 1

# Background

### **Aims of the review**

The review has been undertaken to provide findings that are relevant and useful to students and teachers at Hatch End High School in Harrow, Middlesex. The initial aim of the review was to find out if planned interventions in school settings improved young people's personal and social relationships. As the review developed in consultation with the students and teachers, the specific area of conflict resolution and peer mediation was chosen to study in depth.

### **Review question**

The broad question for the review was:

*Do planned interventions in school settings improve young people's personal and social relationships?*

From the systematic map, a subset of the literature was selected to be studied in depth to address the following question:

*Do planned educational interventions in conflict resolution skills, negotiation skills and peer mediation improve young people's personal and social relationships?*

### **The review group**

This systematic review was carried out by the Personal Social and Health Education (PSHE) Review Group, a Review Group based at Hatch End High School in Harrow. The Group was made up of a team of students, five teachers and a parent, with support from an Advisory Group (for details of authors and Review Group see Appendix 1.1). The students and teachers chose the topic for the review; the work of finding, appraising and synthesising the relevant research was done by researchers from the EPPI-Centre. Although the project was initiated by a PSHE teacher, the eventual review, which looks in depth at programmes in conflict resolution and peer mediation, has relevance beyond PSHE. The findings are important for the current national policy concern about school behaviour and more widely for the many groups and individuals working to improve young people's relationships. The way that the Group attempted to use participatory methods is also of interest.

### **Policy and research context**

There is evidence that relationships of all sorts are very important to young people. For example, questions to websites for young people are often about friendships and

relationships with family as well as about more 'obvious' topics, such as sex (e.g. McPherson and Macfarlane, 2004). A survey of 510 teenagers aged 15-19, conducted by the Kids and Youth Consultancy for the Get Connected helpline, indicated that the greatest problem faced by the young people was their relationship with friends, family and others (reported by 31%). Drugs came next (19%) and bullying third (13%) (Get Connected, 2002). Childline's analysis of calls from boys and young men (Childline, 2003) showed that bullying, violence and family tensions were the main reasons for calls.

Government and media interest has tended to focus less on relationships in the broad sense and more on specific topics that are seen as problematic - sex, drugs and alcohol, violence and bullying. The choice of relationships as the topic for this review provided the Review Group with a challenge to look behind the most topical issues to the underlying questions of how young people relate to friends, family, peers and teachers.

The Review Group started by focusing on Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE), but the topic chosen by the young people is much wider. For this review, the focus on interventions has been restricted to those based in mainstream schools. Even so, the research that we are covering is relevant to areas beyond PSHE, including citizenship; behaviour, attendance and bullying; inclusion and participation in school decisions; homework policies; motivation and self-esteem; and initiatives like Healthy Schools.

PSHE in England is covered by non-statutory guidelines (see, for example, the relevant sections in the National Curriculum website, [www.nc.uk.net](http://www.nc.uk.net)). The DfES guidelines for PSHE at Key Stage 3 (ages 13-14) include a section on 'developing good relationships and respecting the differences between people'. PSHE is not covered in initial teacher training, although some ITT students can take it as a special subject. Although it is not included in the National Curriculum, it has some overlaps with Citizenship education, which is

covered. In addition schools have statutory responsibilities in sex and relationships education (SRE). Following a report on SRE from Ofsted in April 2002, a Professional Development and Accreditation Programme, designed to raise the status and quality of SRE teaching was set up and is being rolled out nationally. In September 2002, a pilot specialist training scheme for school nurses was also begun. The Department of Health is funding a project to develop a school SRE programme specifically for boys. Drug education has also been the subject of recent initiatives with English state secondary schools required to have anti-drugs strategies in place by the beginning of this year. Relationships with peers are likely to be important in drug education.

Relationships also play a key role in Citizenship education. The Department for Education and Skills (DfES) guidance identifies three inter-related components that should run through all education for Citizenship ([www.dfes.gov.uk/citizenship](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/citizenship)).

- *Social and moral responsibility*  
Pupils learning - from the very beginning - self-confidence and socially and morally responsible behaviour both in and beyond the classroom, towards those in authority and towards each other
- *Community involvement*  
Pupils learning about becoming helpfully involved in the life and concerns of their neighbourhood and communities, including learning through community involvement and service to the community
- *Political literacy*  
Pupils learning about the institutions, problems and practices of our democracy and how to make themselves effective in the life of the nation, locally, regionally and nationally through skills and values as well as knowledge - a concept wider than political knowledge alone

Recent initiatives on bullying include the Charter for Action aimed at helping schools to

#### 4 Conflict resolution, peer mediation and young people's relationships

prepare policies and the Anti Bullying Alliance launched by the government in September 2004. Another key policy intervention, the Healthy Schools Standard, includes a strong emphasis on participation of young people in the school's development (National Healthy Schools Standard, 2004a) and on ways of promoting young people's social and emotional wellbeing (National Healthy Schools Standard, 2004b). Most recently, Government policy in England has emphasised behaviour. A Leadership Group on Behaviour and Discipline has been set up to report to the Secretary of State towards the end of 2005 and there is substantial funding for a National Behaviour and Attendance Strategy ([www.dfes.gov.uk/behaviourandattendance](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/behaviourandattendance)).

It is striking that the broad theme of relationships is relevant to the work of so many UK non-governmental organisations. There are support services, such as the NSPCC's school teams, helplines and websites aimed at children and young people (e.g. Childline; Get Connected, Worried? Need to Talk?) and action groups, such as the Sex Education Forum and the Peer Support Forum hosted by the National Children's Bureau. There are similarly targeted campaigns on emotional literacy by the group Antidote ([www.antidote.org.uk](http://www.antidote.org.uk)), several anti-bullying initiatives and many other small and large scale initiatives.

In relation to the topics covered in the in-depth review, Mediation UK ([www.mediationuk.org.uk](http://www.mediationuk.org.uk)) and Leap ([www.leaplinx.com](http://www.leaplinx.com)) are among the groups that provide training and support for UK schools that want to set up negotiation and mediation schemes. Leap coordinates a young mediators' network. These groups argue that the interventions free up teacher time and improve relationships between students (e.g. [www.teachernet.gov.uk/teachingandlearning/library/peermediation/](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/teachingandlearning/library/peermediation/)). There are also links to government initiatives, such as the National Healthy Schools Standard which includes peer mediation in some schools ([www.hda.nhs.uk](http://www.hda.nhs.uk)). Anti-bullying strategies also include peer

mediation as one of several recommended approaches (e.g. [www.dfes.gov.uk/bullying/pack/02.pdf](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/bullying/pack/02.pdf)). Estimates vary of the numbers of schools using peer mediation and related approaches (Baginski, 2004) but there are now many examples of school schemes on individual school websites and those of LEAs and supporting organisations (e.g. [www.citizenshipfoundation.org.uk](http://www.citizenshipfoundation.org.uk)).

This project is part of a move to set up research projects that involve children and young people in the design and conduct of the research. UK voluntary groups often lead the way in involving young people in decision-making and research. This links to two other areas: first, the interest in participation in research by 'stakeholders' (e.g. Mental Health Foundation, 2003; National Healthy Schools Standard, 2004a); and, second, the wider moves to allow young people to have a say in the decisions that affect them. Both these could be seen as deriving their motivation from democratising tendencies in public services and from a belief that people who are directly involved in an issue have a crucial perspective to offer.

Research projects in which young people have been involved in the design or conduct of the research (as opposed to the larger number of studies which have sought the views of children and young people), are relatively recent and fewer in number (e.g. Fielding and Bragg, 2003; Kirby, 2004). We have not been able to identify any other systematic reviews in which young people have been involved in the planning of the review, although there are examples of adults being involved in review groups about health topics, for example through the Cochrane Consumer Network ([www.cochrane.org/consumers/about.htm](http://www.cochrane.org/consumers/about.htm)). In this project, we made the assumption that the involvement of the school students and teachers makes a difference to the research. This could be because it leads to different questions from those most likely to be posed by researchers or because the work is done differently.

Research about young people's relationships is covered by a number of disciplines, including education, sociology, psychology and public health. For example, work relevant to this review could have come from sociological studies of children's relationships with friends and family (e.g. Alanen and Mayall, 2001; Gillies, 2003); studies of students' experiences in schools such as those by the ESRC Consulting Pupils about Teaching and Learning Project (e.g. Rudduck and Flutter, 2004); studies of children's relationships from a child development perspective (e.g. Dunn, 2003); evaluations of large scale policy initiatives (e.g. Warwick et al., 2004); studies from a number of academic perspectives about young people and sexual behaviour, violence, drugs and alcohol use; research about emotional and social wellbeing from public health and other perspectives (e.g. Edwards, 2003; Hartley-Brewer, 2001; Weare and Gray, 2003; Wells et al., 2003).

There tends to be little overlap between these varied research literatures and no single theoretical or conceptual framework. For example, we compared three recent reviews of the literature aimed at, or commissioned by, UK policy-makers with an interest in young people's mental, emotional and social wellbeing (Edwards, 2003; Hartley-Brewer, 2001; Weare and Gray, 2003). We found that fewer than five percent of the references in Edwards' review were present in either of the other two. Overall, the Review Group

expected to find their target studies within a very large and diverse literature, and this expectation was realised, as will be seen in the following chapters.

Recent systematic reviews have offered some support to the idea of whole school health promotion, including benefits in mental and emotional outcomes for children and young people (Licence, 2004; Lister-Sharpe et al., 1999; Wells et al., 2003). Many included studies were, however, rated as methodologically poor in terms of evidence for effectiveness. A systematic review of school-based violence prevention (Mytton et al., 2002) included trials of interventions for children already identified as at risk of aggressive behaviour. This review found that the interventions produced modest reductions in aggressive behaviour, but that study quality was often poor. The authors recommend well designed, large trials. We did not find any systematic reviews in the specific area of conflict resolution and peer mediation.

Other recent reports with literature reviews that are relevant include a study for DfES about children's emotional and social competence (Weare and Gray, 2003), a discussion of the impact of schools on children's mental health (Hartley-Brewer, 2001) and reports of a project on media and young people's personal relationships (Buckingham and Bragg, 2002, 2003).



## CHAPTER TWO

# Methods of the review

### User involvement

This is a school-based review which has taken its direction from pupils and teachers of a secondary school. This approach has aimed to make the review of interest and use to both pupils and teachers. The findings of this review will also have relevance to both policy makers at the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) and those working at local education authorities. In addition, we hope that the review will be of importance to professionals such as those represented on our advisory board (see Appendix 1.1) and other professionals who are concerned with interventions which have an impact on young people's relationships.

A collaboration between the EPPI-centre and Hatch End High School to conduct a systematic review was agreed in the summer of 2003. The collaborative review group was structured so that students and teachers at Hatch End High School were able to choose the topic and direction of the review.

James Thomas (EPPI-Centre) and Marc Tidd (Hatch End High School) agreed to organise the Review Group from members of their respective organisations. Marc identified a team of nine year 10 students, five teachers, a librarian and a parent governor. The year 10 students who agreed to take part were an already established group, which had previously been involved in LEA borough-wide

initiatives in PSHE and Sex and Relationships Education.

Meetings between EPPI-Centre researchers, students and teachers were arranged and held at the school. This enabled the Review Group to decide on the focus of the review question, the inclusion criteria, review-specific keywords, the focus of the in-depth review and the reporting of the review

The first task was to decide on the review question. The PSHE curriculum was presented to students in order to facilitate a discussion on the potential review focus. The students decided that they wanted to focus the review on young people's relationships. The EPPI-Centre Review Group took these ideas and worked on a review question to propose to them. Through a number of consultations and revisions the Review Group decided on the final review question: Do planned educational interventions improve young people's personal and social relationships?

The next set of meetings provided an opportunity for the students and teachers to help narrow the scope of the review. This fed directly into the exclusion criteria. Firstly, students and teachers wanted to know about the education interventions that are taking place in secondary schools with students of compulsory secondary school age. Secondly, they wanted to know what works in terms of improving young people's social and personal

relationships. The group then drew up a list of topics they did or did not want to see prioritised.

The contents of this list were also used to aid the EPPI-Centre members during the screening process. It provided a guide when deciding what counted as a school based intervention and what counted as personal and social relationships outcomes. Active reflection on what the students and teachers would want to be included provided greater clarification during the screening process, more so than if it had only been the EPPI-Centre staff making these decisions.

Consultation about the topic for the in-depth review was less satisfactory, partly owing to the timing of the research. The map of the literature was not completed until after the school term ended for the summer. Just before that, in July 2004, the team held a small meeting at the school where the preliminary results of the map were discussed with one teacher and four students. The meeting also covered the rough version of the video that the students were producing. Ideas for possible topics for in-depth review were briefly discussed and tended to focus on communication and communication skills for teachers and students. Over the summer holidays, the researchers finished the map and looked for ways of identifying a clear review question for the in-depth review. It was difficult to make a reliable selection of studies to follow through the suggestion about communication as a topic and, after several internal meetings, it was proposed to look at studies of conflict resolution and peer mediation. This was checked with Marc Tidd but not at a meeting with the students.

We held a final meeting at the school in April 2005 where we presented the main findings of the in-depth review. Students commented on their experiences of peer support and other similar approaches. This was our last opportunity to meet the group of students because they were doing their GCSEs and then leaving school (Hatch End High School takes students up to age 16). See section 5.2.2 of

the Technical Report for some comments about collaboration in systematic reviews.

In parallel with the review process, students carried out primary research in the school. This included questionnaires and focus groups which were designed and carried out by the year 10 students. The questionnaires asked about PSHE lessons, friendships and views about family and girlfriend/boyfriend issues; the questionnaires were distributed to years 8 and 9. The focus groups asked small groups of pupils from years 8, 9 and 10 to talk about relationships. The findings from the questionnaires and videos were used to help in the review process by clarifying the views of students about relationships. See Appendix 2.4 of the Technical Report for further details.

## Review Methods

The focus of the review, the inclusion criteria, the review specific keywords and the topic for the in-depth review were decided through a series of meetings between the EPPI-Centre and the students and teachers from Hatch End High School. The review methods followed EPPI-Centre procedures.

Reports of relevant research were identified from electronic databases, citations from reference lists, web searches and personal contacts. For a study to be included in the systematic map it had to be an evaluation of a planned intervention in a mainstream school; published after 1986; include outcomes on relationships; and the average age of participants needed to fall within the 11-16 range.

The studies found in this way were then described using both generic EPPI-Centre keywords and review-specific keywords to create a 'map' of the research literature. After looking at the results of the map the group went on to decide on the question for the in-depth review. The decision was made to look at whether interventions involving conflict resolution skills, negotiation skills and peer mediation improve young people's personal and social relationships. Studies in

## 8 Conflict resolution, peer mediation and young people's relationships

the map were excluded from the in-depth review if they were not an evaluation of a conflict resolution intervention; if the report did not have a control group or if the study was published before 1994.

The studies in the in-depth review were then read and described in more detail using EPPI-centre data-extraction questions, including assessments of the weight of evidence (WoE) that each study lent to the review. Quality-

assurance was carried out at the screening, keywording and data-extraction stages, for example by a study being data-extracted independently by two people and then results compared and agreed. Finally the results of the selected studies were brought together in a synthesis.

More details of the methods are given in the Technical Report.



## CHAPTER THREE

# What research was found?

The initial electronic searching identified 6,002 papers, which were screened for potential relevance on the basis of title and abstract. A further 53 potentially relevant papers were identified through handsearching. A total of 612 papers were then obtained and re-screened against the inclusion/exclusion criteria on the basis of the full paper. Of these, 75 intervention studies were included and keyworded. These studies made up the map. There were 47 studies from the USA, 11 from the UK and 17 from other countries. Studies across a wide range of different topics were included in the map if their focus was on young people's relationships. About half (38/75) studied interventions that were aimed at emotional or social wellbeing; a third (24/75) were on health topics, including the use of drugs and alcohol, and sexual behaviour; and the largest number (42/75) were about behaviour (including studies of interventions to target bullying and violence). The studies included assessment of very diverse outcomes. Further details of the characteristics of the studies in the map are given in the Technical Report.

Ten studies were included in the in-depth review. These are listed at the end of this report (in the References section) and described in detail in the Technical Report. Seven of the ten were from the USA, two were from Canada and one was from Australia. Although some relevant UK studies were found during the searching, none of them met all the inclusion criteria. The ten included studies varied considerably in the types of interventions they evaluated and in the

outcome measures that they used. On account of the inclusion criteria, the interventions were all based in schools and the students were mainly in the 11-16 age group. All the interventions included teaching or training in conflict resolution or negotiation skills. In six studies, peer mediation was also a part of the intervention and, in one, it was present in both the intervention and control group; none of the studies assessed the impact of adding peer mediation to an existing conflict resolution programme. The interventions were usually delivered during lessons but, in three studies, there was some activity that involved the whole school. In three studies, by one research team, conflict resolution training was integrated into the academic curriculum.

The outcomes assessed in these ten studies ranged from reported episodes of violence through to young people's attitudes towards disputes. Some studies collected a wider range of outcomes and three looked at academic achievement. A few of the studies did not include any follow-up of the effects of the intervention.

Two studies scored Low on overall weight of evidence (D) and were excluded from the final synthesis of evidence. In four studies, almost all outcomes were specifically violence related and, because of this, we rated these studies as having medium weight of evidence for our review. The remaining four studies were given a high weight of evidence.



## CHAPTER FOUR

# What were the findings of the studies?

The studies in the in-depth review do, on the whole, suggest that interventions promoting peer mediation, negotiation and conflict resolution skills produce some positive effects which may endure beyond the end of the intervention. These include retention of knowledge and skills pertaining to conflict resolution, peer mediation and negotiation, and some lasting effects on discipline and behaviour. Few negative findings were reported at all in these studies. However, the impact of the programmes were sometimes limited or confined to less relevant or more short-term outcomes.

Only two studies with follow-up of students beyond the end of the intervention examined impact on student behaviour and discipline (Farrell et al., 2001; Orpinas et al., 2000) and only Farrell et al. used school records of behaviour problems.

The impact of the Students for Peace intervention, evaluated by Orpinas et al. (2000) was disappointing, especially as this was a large-scale evaluation involving eight schools. The researchers found no impact of the intervention on self-reported aggressive behaviours, fights at school, injuries due to fighting, missing classes because of feeling unsafe at school, or being threatened with harm. The researchers acknowledge that the Students for Peace programme was not able to address exposure to community violence, which they believed was strongly related to

student levels of aggression in this particular study.

Farrell et al. (2000) obtained mixed results from their study, but again, on the whole, these were disappointing and inconclusive. They found few significant differences in either self-reported aggressive behaviour or that recorded by others at six and twelve months. The study did show that students who participated in Responding in Peaceful and Positive Ways reported more frequent use of a peer mediation programme, and reductions in fight-related injuries, immediately after the intervention. The participants were also less likely to have disciplinary code violations and in-school suspensions than those in the control group, and this effect appeared to persist for up to 12 months. However, the differences at 12-month follow-up did not reach statistical significance, except in the case of suspension rates for boys. The researchers also acknowledged that the intervention effects on violent behaviour were moderated by initial levels of self-reported violence, benefiting mainly those students with the highest levels.

Both these research teams are taking part in a new multisite violence prevention evaluation which is yet to report (Meyer et al., 2004). This includes conflict resolution strategies within a violence prevention curriculum and the collection of data from students, parents and teachers in 37 schools.

The three studies in this review by Stevahn et al. (1996, 1997 and 2002) report positive effects in all the outcomes that they set out to measure. For example, students who had taken part in an intervention class knew many more steps of an integrative negotiation procedure than those in the control class, both immediately after intervention and seven months later. The finding of an improvement in marks for the academic assessment of the course within which the programme was embedded is an interesting bonus for the work. A further interesting finding was that skills in analysing conflict were transferred to another academic area after the intervention finished.

Over the course of their research, this team has sought to improve the evaluation of the way that students apply what they have learned. Being able to give correct responses in a hypothetical conflict may not translate

into a change in behaviour in a real dispute. Yet it is clearly of the greatest importance to teachers and researchers to know whether interventions do work in 'real life' settings and whether they equip students with transferable skills. The most recent study (Stevahn et al., 2002) for example, set up a team project near the end of the intervention that allowed teachers to pair up students with opposing views about how to teach younger students about a given aspect of the work. Students were asked to find a way to resolve the difference within their pair. This comes closer to a real conflict situation and allows skills to be displayed.

The research covered in this review did not allow the impact of peer-mediation programmes to be assessed since conflict resolution or negotiation programmes with and without the addition of organised peer mediation were not compared.



## CHAPTER FIVE

# Implications

### **Strengths and limitations**

This review has been unusual in involving pupils and teachers in shaping the whole approach of the review. The focus on relationship outcomes would not have come from the research partners in this team but was what the pupils, in particular, wanted. The benefit of this has been to bring together research from different viewpoints and to look carefully at what sort of outcomes are being measured in a range of intervention studies in secondary school settings.

However, the research question for the map was difficult to handle. It was hard to find studies with particular types of outcome because most studies are catalogued by the type of intervention they report. We feel that relevant studies will have been missed and we would like to repeat the searches now that we have a better idea of the wide range of types of studies that are caught in the net. We were also disappointed that there was not time to map and review in depth the studies of young people's views about relationships. This would have been very helpful in pointing out young people's areas of concern and in helping to identify types of interventions that could be searched for and assessed.

Our in-depth review is, as far as we know, the only systematic review of these types of intervention. It draws attention to the limitations of the primary research in this field

and points the way to further evaluations. We consider that, even though none of the studies was done in the UK, the results of in-depth review are relevant to UK schools.

We are aware that some studies may have been missed by the searches that we used and one or two relevant studies were found too late for inclusion. The number of evaluations of good methodological quality was limited. Studies tended to be small and to have no reported sample size calculations. Periods of follow-up tended to be short. Researchers were not generally looking for the possibility that interventions might have adverse impacts as well as benefits and there was no discussion about cost-effectiveness. Some evaluations were carried out by those who had devised and championed a particular type of intervention. It was disappointing that there were no UK evaluations that met our methodological criteria. The Review Group is aware that the findings of the in-depth review may be disappointing for teachers looking for well evaluated, effective programmes to use in schools to address the needs of students in the field of relationships. We would encourage teachers and others to comment on the review and to suggest types of programme that could be the subject of future systematic reviews. There might also be new approaches that seem promising and that are already being used in schools; it would be good to look for opportunities for researchers to collaborate with schools to evaluate these.

## Implications for policy and practice

- UK Schools that adopt these promising interventions in the area of conflict resolution, negotiation and peer mediation could consider doing so in the context of an evaluation. Such an evaluation could involve many schools, perhaps linked through one of the voluntary networks in this field.
- Conflict resolution, negotiation and peer mediation skills are most effectively learned and retained when integrated into the academic curriculum rather than taught separately. This has already been demonstrated successfully in English Literature and Social Studies classes, but there is plenty of scope in other areas of the curriculum (for example, Religious Education, History, Geography, Psychology).
- Parents should be participants in school-based interventions.
- The community context in which the intervention takes place, especially levels of violence to which students are exposed in the local community, should be taken into account in designing and implementing school-based interventions.

## Implications for research

- In order to evaluate the impact of peer mediation and conflict resolution in UK schools, we would suggest that entire

schools be allocated at random to intervention and control conditions with three arms: Conflict Resolution with Peer Mediation, Conflict Resolution only, and Control Group with no intervention. Such a trial would need to have enough clusters to provide sound answers. A wide range of outcomes should be assessed with adequate length of follow-up. (It seems important to us to know whether a programme has a lasting impact on students, teachers and perhaps the wider family and community.)

- Involve school students in the design and evaluation of interventions. Take into account the influence of parents and the community, and involve them in study design, implementation and evaluation.
- Promote good practice in evaluation so that scepticism is the rule and evaluations are not led by those who may have an interest in the marketing of products to do with the intervention. Consider the possibility that interventions may do more harm than good.
- Extend the present review by mapping young people's views; update the map with recent studies; develop methodological work on outcomes and on search strategies; and do further in-depth reviews (e.g. studies that have as one of their outcomes young people's relationships with their families).
- Develop more opportunities for working on systematic reviews in collaboration with students and teachers.



# References

## A. Studies included in the in-depth review

Bosworth K, Espelage D, DuBay T, Daytner G, Karageorge K (2000) Preliminary evaluation of a multimedia violence prevention program for adolescents. *American Journal of Health Behavior* 24: 268-280.

DuRant RH, Barkin S, Krowchuk DP (2001) Evaluation of a peaceful conflict resolution and violence prevention curriculum for sixth-grade students. *Journal of Adolescent Health* 28: 386-393.

Farrell D, Meyer AL (1997) The effectiveness of a school-based curriculum for reducing violence among sixth grade students. *American Journal of Public Health* 87: 979-984.

Johnson DW, Johnson R, Dudley B, Mitchell J, Fredrickson J (1997) The impact of conflict resolution training on middle school students. *Journal of Social Psychology* 137: 11-22.

Stevahn L, Johnson DW, Johnson RT, Laginski AM, O'Coin I (1996) Effects on high school students of integrating conflict resolution and peer mediation training into an academic unit. *Mediation Quarterly* 14: 21-35.

Stevahn L, Johnson DW, Johnson RT, Green K, Laginski AM (1997) Effects on high school students of conflict resolution training integrated into English literature. *Journal of Social Psychology* 137: 302-315.

Stevahn L, Johnson DW, Johnson RT, Schultz R (2002) Effects of conflict resolution training integrated into a high school social studies curriculum. *Journal of Social Psychology* 142:305-333.

Orpinas P, Kelder S, Frankowski R, Murray N, Zhang Q, McAlister A (2000) Outcome evaluation of a multi-component violence-prevention program for middle schools: the Students for Peace project. *Health Education Research* 15: 45-58.

Smith SW, Daunic AP, Miller MD, Robinson TR (2002) Conflict resolution and peer mediation in middle schools:

extending the process and outcome knowledge base. *Journal of Social Psychology* 142: 567-586.

Soutter A, McKenzie A (1998) An evaluation of the dispute resolution project in Australian secondary schools. *School Psychology International* 19: 307-316.

## Other references cited

Alanen L, Mayall B (eds) (2001) *Conceptualising Child-Adult Relations*. London: Routledge Falmer.

Baginsky W (2004) *Peer Mediation in the UK: A Guide for Schools*. London, NSPCC. Available from: [www.nspcc.org.uk/Inform/Downloads/PeerMediationInTheUK.pdf](http://www.nspcc.org.uk/Inform/Downloads/PeerMediationInTheUK.pdf)

Buckingham D, Bragg S (2002) *Young People and Sexual Content on Television*. London: Broadcasting Standards Commission.

Buckingham D, Bragg S (2003) *Young People, Media and Personal Relationships*. London: Broadcasting Standards Commission.

Childline (2003) *Boys Allowed*. London: Childline. Available from: [www.childline.org.uk/pdfs/boys.pdf](http://www.childline.org.uk/pdfs/boys.pdf)

Dunn J (2003) *Children's Friendships: The beginnings of intimacy*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Edwards L (2003) *Promoting Young People's Wellbeing: A Review of Research on Emotional Health*. SCRE Report No. 115. Glasgow: University of Glasgow.

Fielding M, Bragg S (2003) *Students as Researchers: Making a difference*. Cambridge: Pearson.

Get Connected (2002) *Nowhere to Turn*. Available from: [www.getconnected.org.uk/](http://www.getconnected.org.uk/)

- Gillies V (2003) *Family and Intimate Relationships: A Review of Sociological Research*. London: South Bank University. Available from: [www.lsbu.ac.uk/families/workingpapers/familieswp2.pdf](http://www.lsbu.ac.uk/families/workingpapers/familieswp2.pdf)
- Hartley-Brewer E (2001) *Learning to Trust and Trusting to Learn: how schools can affect children's mental health*. London: Institute for Public Policy Research.
- Kirby P (2004) *A Guide to Actively Involving Young People in Research*. Eastleigh, Hants: Involve.
- Licence K (2004) Promoting and protecting the health of children and young people. *Child: Care, Health and Development* 30: 623-635.
- Lister-Sharpe D, Chapman S, Stewart-Brown S, Sowden A (1999) Health promoting schools and health promotion in schools: two systematic reviews. *Health Technology Assessment* 3 (22).
- McPherson A, Macfarlane A (2004) *Relationships: The Truth*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Mental Health Foundation (2003) *Surviving User-Led Research: Reflections on Supporting User-Led Research Projects*. London: Mental Health Foundation. Available from: [www.mentalhealth.org.uk/page.cfm?pagecode=PBRRMHSU&#surviving](http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/page.cfm?pagecode=PBRRMHSU&#surviving)
- Mytton JA, DiGiuseppi C, Gough D, Taylor R, Logan S (2002) School-based violence prevention programs: a systematic review of secondary prevention trials. *Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine* 156: 752-762.
- National Healthy Schools Standard (2004a) *Promoting children and young people's participation through the NHSS*. London: Health Development Agency.
- National Healthy Schools Standard (2004b) *Promoting emotional health and wellbeing through the NHSS*. London: Health Development Agency.
- Rudduck J, Flutter J (2004) *How to Improve your School: Giving Pupils a Voice*. London: Continuum Press.
- Warwick I, Aggleton P, Chase E, Schagen S, Blenkinsop S, Schagen I, Scott E, Eggers M (2005) *Health Education Research: Theory and Practice* 20: 697-708.
- Weare K, Gray G (2003) *What works in developing children's emotional and social competence and wellbeing? Research Report 456*. London: DfES.
- Wells J, Barlow J, Stewart-Brown S (2003) A systematic review of universal approaches to mental health promotion in schools. *Health Education* 103:197-220.



# Authorship of this report

This work is a report of a systematic review conducted by the Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) school-based review group.

The authors of this report are

Jo Garcia (EPPI-Centre)  
Jennifer Sinclair (EPPI-Centre)  
Kelly Dickson (EPPI-Centre)  
James Thomas (EPPI-Centre)  
Jeff Brunton (EPPI-Centre)  
Marc Tidd (Hatch End High School, Harrow)  
The PSHE Review Group

They conducted the review with the benefit of advice and active participation from the members of the review group.

For further information about this review, or for further information about the work of the EPPI-Centre, please contact:

EPPI-Centre  
Social Science Research Unit  
Institute of Education, University of London  
18 Woburn Square  
London WC1H 0NR  
tel: +44 (0)20 7612 6131  
fax: +44 (0)20 7612 6800  
email: [EPPIAdmin@ioe.ac.uk](mailto:EPPIAdmin@ioe.ac.uk)

**Institutional base**

Hatch End High School  
 Headstone Lane  
 Hatch End  
 Harrow  
 Middlesex  
 HA3 6NR

**Review team membership**

Jeff Brunton	EPPI-Centre
Kelly Dickson	EPPI-Centre
Jo Garcia	EPPI-Centre
Jennifer Sinclair	EPPI-Centre
James Thomas	EPPI-Centre
Marc Tidd	Hatch End High School

**Advisory group membership***School Students from Hatch End High School*

Georgie Adams  
 Alistair Blake  
 Alex Charman  
 Daniel Cusack  
 Rhea De Souza  
 Sam Parker  
 Hursh Rughani  
 Pujan Shah  
 Nabeela Shamsuddin

*Others from Hatch End High School*

Simon Evans (teacher)  
 Heather House (teacher)  
 Marc Tidd (teacher)  
 Philip Mead (teacher)  
 Cordula Schirmeister (Chair of Parent Teacher Association)  
 Louis Victor (Librarian)  
 Lesley Walker (teacher)

*Advisory Committee*

Simon Blake	National Children's Bureau
Sara Bragg	University of Sussex
Jan Campbell	Qualification and Curriculum Authority
Angela Harden	EPPI-Centre
Colleen McLaughlin	Cambridge University
Sarah MacLean	Department for Education and Skills
Gill Roberts	Curriculum Leader PHSE, Harrow LEA
Vicki Strange	Social Science Research Unit, Institute of Education, University of London
Katherine Weare	Southampton University

### **Conflicts of interest**

All members of the team were young once or still are.

### **Acknowledgements**

The review team would like to thank all the members of the Advisory Group and also the following: Mary Baginsky (NSPCC); Michael Baker (Southampton University); Sue Sharpe (Visiting Fellow, Social Science Research Unit); Daniel Wight (MRC Social and Public Health Sciences Unit, Glasgow University); Rose Wiles (Southampton University); Jon Ashton, Zoe Garrett, David Gough, Jennifer Gray, Mark Newman (EPPI-Centre).

The results of this systematic review are available in four formats:

**SUMMARY**

Explains the purpose of the review and the main messages from the research evidence

**REPORT**

Describes the background and the findings of the review(s) but without full technical details of the methods used

**TECHNICAL  
REPORT**

Includes the background, main findings, and full technical details of the review

**DATABASES**

Access to codings describing each research study included in the review

These can be downloaded or accessed at <http://eppi.ioe.ac.uk/reel/>

First produced in 2006 by:

Evidence for Policy and Practice Information and Co-ordinating Centre (EPPI-Centre)  
Social Science Research Unit  
Institute of Education, University of London  
18 Woburn Square  
London WC1H 0NR

Tel: +44 (0)20 7612 6367

<http://eppi.ioe.ac.uk/>

<http://www.ioe.ac.uk/ssru/>

The **Evidence for Policy and Practice Information and Co-ordinating Centre** (EPPI-Centre) is part of the Social Science Research Unit (SSRU) at the Institute of Education, University of London.

The EPPI-Centre was established in 1993 to address the need for a systematic approach to the organisation and review of evidence-based work on social interventions. The work and publications of the Centre engage health and education policy makers, practitioners and service users in discussions about how researchers can make their work more relevant and how to use research findings.

Founded in 1990, the Social Science Research Unit (SSRU) is based at the Institute of Education, University of London. Our mission is to engage in and otherwise promote rigorous, ethical and participative social research as well as to support evidence-informed public policy and practice across a range of domains including education, health and welfare, guided by a concern for human rights, social justice and the development of human potential.

The views expressed in this work are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the funder. All errors and omissions remain those of the authors.

This document is available in a range of accessible formats including large print. Please contact the Institute of Education for assistance:

telephone: +44 (0)20 7947 9556 email: [info@ioe.ac.uk](mailto:info@ioe.ac.uk)