
UK Resilience Programme Evaluation: Final Report

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Introduction

There are increasing concerns about children's well-being in the UK, their behaviour, and the low academic attainment of a large fraction of the population.¹ The Every Child Matters agenda stressed schools' potential and duty to promote pupils' well-being. In September 2007, three local authorities (South Tyneside, Manchester and Hertfordshire) piloted the UK Resilience Programme with Year 7 pupils in 22 of their schools, with the aim of building pupils' resilience and promoting their well-being. More schools have since started teaching the programme.

This evaluation aims to investigate whether the programme (previously trialled in small samples) can be delivered at scale, and whether it has an impact on children's well-being, behaviour, attendance and academic attainment.

The first interim report was published in April 2009 and gives an overview of the UK Resilience Programme and its implementation, describes the evaluation, and offers preliminary findings about programme impact, as well as detailed case studies on the first year of programme implementation. The report also contains a bibliography and descriptions of previous research on the Penn Resiliency Program (the curriculum on which UKRP is based), and describes the curriculum in detail.

The Second Interim Report was published in June 2010 and contains detailed case studies from the third year of implementation, as well as updated information about programme impact.

In the final report we refer back to the two interim reports,² which provide more details of the evaluation.

¹ See, for example, the recent UNICEF report "An overview of child well-being in rich countries" which puts the UK at the bottom of a list of 21 advanced countries:
http://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/rc7_eng.pdf

² Referred to as Challen et al. (2009) and Challen et al. (2010). All three evaluation reports are by the same authors.

The First Interim Report can be found online at:

<http://www.education.gov.uk/publications//eOrderingDownload/DCSF-RR094.pdf>

The Second Interim Report can be found online at:

<http://www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/DFE-RR006.pdf>

Methodology

Information on pupils' well-being was collected through questionnaires administered before and after the programme to pupils who had participated in the first year of UKRP workshops. Questionnaires were also completed by a control group. The quantitative work examines the impact on the original cohort of pupils (those in workshops in 2007-08) over a three year period. In addition, interviews with pupils, facilitators (workshop leaders) and school managers were carried out in 10 of the 22 secondary schools involved in the programme at the end of the academic year 2007-08, and follow-up interviews were carried out in 9 of these 10 schools in the autumn term of 2009-10. The interviews explore participants' experiences of the programme, and how schools were implementing the programme in the pilot year and then two years later.

Key findings from the final evaluation report

- The quantitative work found a significant short-term improvement in pupils' depression symptom scores, school attendance rates, and academic attainment in English. There was some impact on anxiety scores and maths attainment, but this was inconsistent and concentrated in a few groups of pupils.
- The size of the impact varied by how workshops were organised. Weekly workshops showed a larger impact than those timetabled fortnightly.
- The impact also varied by pupil characteristics. Pupils who were entitled to free school meals who had not attained the national targets at Key Stage 2, and who had worse initial symptoms of depression or anxiety, were all more likely to experience a larger measured impact of the workshops on their depression and anxiety scores. There was little difference by pupil characteristics on the absence rate.
- On average the effect of the workshops lasted only as long as the academic year, and had faded by the one-year follow-up questionnaire in June 2009. However, there was still an impact for certain groups at follow-up, particularly for pupils who had not attained the national target levels at Key Stage 2 in English or maths. There was no impact on any of the outcome measures by the two-year follow-up in June 2010.
- There was no measured impact of workshops on behaviour scores or life satisfaction scores.
- Return visits to nine of the case study schools in autumn 2009 revealed that seven of the nine schools were continuing to deliver the UKRP to all Year 7 pupils.
- Facilitators were extremely positive about the ideas underlying the programme and about the training they had received. Most reported that they used the skills themselves.
- Facilitators found the curriculum materials too didactic and thought they could be improved.
- Pupils were generally positive about the programme. Interviews for the First Interim Report suggested that pupils had applied UKRP skills in real life

situations, and some interviewees showed a good understanding of elements of the programme.

Background

The UK Resilience Programme is the UK implementation of the Penn Resiliency Program, a well-being programme that has been trialled more than 13 times in different settings. The UKRP was taught from September 2007 in three participating local authorities, and those workshops that took place in mainstream schools form the subject of this evaluation.

The Penn Resiliency Program (PRP) is a curriculum developed by a team of psychologists at the University of Pennsylvania. Its original aim was to prevent adolescent depression, but it now has a broader remit of building resilience and promoting realistic thinking, adaptive coping skills and social problem-solving in children. The primary aim of the programme is to improve psychological well-being, but it is possible that any such improvement could also have an impact on behaviour, attendance and academic outcomes. Thirteen controlled trials have found PRP to be effective in helping protect children against symptoms of anxiety and depression, and some studies have found an impact on behaviour. The skills taught in PRP could be applied in many contexts, including relationships with peers and family members, and achievement in academic or other activities.

PRP is a manualised intervention comprising 18 hours of workshops. ("Manualised" means that no additional materials or resources are required to lead the workshops.) The curriculum teaches cognitive-behavioural and social problem-solving skills. Central to PRP is Ellis's *Activating-Belief-Consequences* model that beliefs about events mediate their impact on emotions and behaviour. PRP participants are encouraged to identify and challenge (unrealistic) negative beliefs, to employ evidence to make more accurate appraisals of situations and others' behaviour, and to use effective coping mechanisms when faced with adversity. Participants also learn techniques for positive social behaviour, assertiveness, negotiation, decision-making, and relaxation.

The manualised nature of the curriculum and the intensive training required before using it allows facilitators to be drawn from a wide range of professions and agencies including teachers, learning mentors, teaching assistants, psychologists and health professionals. The training for the original cohort of teachers lasted around 8-10 days, with the first half of the course focusing on teaching trainees the adult-level Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) skills, and the second week on familiarising them with the students' curriculum and practising how to communicate it to pupils.³

Additional information on the content of each PRP lesson can be found in Annex C of the First Interim Evaluation Report, Challen et al. (2009).

Additional information on PRP can be found online at:

<http://www.ppc.sas.upenn.edu/prpsum.htm>

Evaluation design

The research consists of three main parts: **quantitative analysis** based on a controlled trial design; **surveys of teacher and pupil satisfaction** with the programme; and a **qualitative case study** element.

³ More recent training events for the PRP have been cut down to 5-7 days.

Findings from all three strands were reported in the first interim report. Please see this report for more detail on evaluation methodology. The second interim report detailed further results from the quantitative and case study investigations. The final evaluation report presents further analysis of the controlled trial element of the study, looking at the impact of the programme over time on psychological outcomes, behaviour and academic attainment. It also summarises the main findings of the case study strand.

Findings from quantitative analysis in final report

Year 7 pupils were surveyed at the beginning of the school year before the start of the intervention, at the end of the intervention and at the end of the academic year (two or three times in one year, depending on workshop timing). There were further follow-up surveys in July 2009 and July 2010, when the pupils in the workshop cohort were in Years 8 and 9 respectively.

We found that there was a short-term impact of the UK Resilience Programme on depression scores, school attendance, and English scores. However, the average impact had faded by one-year follow-up for the depression score and for absence from school. There was still an average impact on English grades at the one-year follow-up, while for the maths score there was no impact in the short-term but a significant impact at the one-year follow-up stage. There was no impact on any of the measures we used by the time of the two-year follow-up (although no data are yet available to assess this in relation to the absence rate).

We found some heterogeneity in the measured effects of the UK Resilience Programme, in terms of how the workshops were organised, the outcomes assessed, and the impact on different groups of pupils. Workshops that were timetabled weekly and which started at the beginning of the academic year appeared to have a larger impact on depression scores and absence than those that either started later or were timetabled fortnightly, but these differences were not statistically significant in the short run.

Furthermore, we found variation in the impact of treatment by pupil characteristics: in general, lower attaining and more disadvantaged pupils appeared to gain more from the workshops, and in some cases the programme impact had not faded at the one-year follow-up for these groups. Specifically, the impact of the workshops on anxiety and depression scores was larger for pupils entitled to free school meals; for pupils who had not attained the national target levels in Key Stage 2 exams; and for pupils with worse initial scores for symptoms of depression or anxiety. The impact on these outcomes also seemed to be greater for some girls, e.g. girls with low prior attainment. Interestingly, there did not seem to be so much heterogeneity in terms of the impact when the outcome was the absence rate. To the extent that there was some heterogeneity this was concentrated in other groups: the less disadvantaged (not FSM; higher attaining) and those with moderate absence rates at baseline. However, very few of these differences were strongly statistically significant, and overall the average impact of the workshops was fairly evenly distributed across groups of pupils.

Some of the observed heterogeneity might be at least partly due to the lack of sensitivity of the measures used. For instance, the psychological and behavioural measures used may be good at detecting change above a certain level of symptoms, but were unable to detect improvements in those who already had good psychological well-being or more 'ordinary' behaviour. The same applies to the

absence rate: since 27% of the sample had no absence at the baseline, there is little or no room for improvement. This is probably not the case for the academic data: we used Key Stage 2 results in English, maths and science as the baseline for our analysis, and there was more variation in grades (in sublevels) here than for the other measures. However, we did not have these data for all schools involved in the evaluation, so we cannot report full analyses here.

In summary, we found some impact of participation in UK Resilience Programme workshops on depression scores, absence rates, and academic attainment. The impact was small, and relatively short-lived: for no outcome measure did it persist until two years after the end of workshops. We also found no impact on behaviour scores, whether measured by pupil self-reports or by teacher reports, or on life satisfaction scores. We found some heterogeneity in impact by the organisation or timing of workshops, and by pupil characteristics.

Findings from qualitative analysis in final report

This section reports findings from case study visits to 10 out of the 22 UKRP schools. Initial visits were made to the schools during the spring and summer terms of 2007-08 – that is, the first year in which the UKRP was delivered. At this point, the first cohort of UKRP facilitators had completed their training which took place in the USA during the summer holiday of 2007. They were therefore in their first year of delivering the UKRP programme. Nine of these 10 schools were then revisited during the autumn term of 2009-10 – that is, the third year in which the UKRP was delivered. By this time two more cohorts of facilitators had received UKRP training, during a residential training event held in the summer of 2008 and non-residential training events held locally in 2009. The findings provide qualitative data to deepen the understanding of the UKRP and to provide a context for the quantitative results presented earlier in this report. In particular, the qualitative case study element of the research aimed to provide some insight into how the programme was implemented within schools, programme participants' reflections on their experience of the UKRP and also to provide some examples of pupils' use of the UKRP skills.

All of the qualitative fieldwork, which was conducted earlier in the evaluation, was reported on in the previous interim reports (Challen et al., 2009; Challen et al., 2010). In this section we present findings relating to pupils' use of UKRP skills, because they illustrate some of the skills being taught and therefore complement the quantitative findings. In addition we present some key findings related to the implementation of the UKRP and facilitators' reflections on the programme. Earlier reports provide greater detail on these issues.

Many of the pupils interviewed during the 2007-08 session reported that they had used some of the UKRP skills in real life. Some pupils showed a good level of understanding when they applied the UKRP skills to their own experiences. More numerous were pupils who described using UKRP skills in circumstances in which they had 'not risen' to some form of provocation. Many, although not all, of these responses were somewhat sketchy. Other interviewees described using the ABC model or skills such as assertiveness and negotiation. Examples provided by pupils tended to focus on day to day problems such as conflict with siblings. Pupils frequently reported that UKRP sessions were among their favourite lessons.

In both years, facilitators who were interviewed tended to be positive about the objectives of the programme and also about their experiences of delivering it. They spoke particularly positively about the quality of the training they had received. However, in both years they were less positive about the course materials. In

particular, the course was thought to involve too much 'teacher talk' and many thought it would benefit from a greater range of activities in which pupils could participate.

Seven of the nine schools that were revisited in 2009-10 were continuing to deliver the UKRP to new cohorts of Year 7 pupils. Perhaps this is the best indicator of schools' overall satisfaction with the operation of the programme within schools. In these seven schools, the UKRP was delivered to all Year 7 pupils and more members of staff had been trained as facilitators. In some schools interviewees remarked that there had been a shift from the programme being delivered by teachers to it being delivered by members of the auxiliary staff such as teaching assistants and learning mentors. This provided greater flexibility in timetabling the UKRP. It was suggested that this drift may have resulted from pressure on teachers to focus on attainment and also pay, workload and career development considerations. Schools that continued to offer the UKRP primarily through sessions facilitated by teachers tended to have good track records in pupil attainment. This may have provided the confidence to allow teachers to devote time and energy to the UKRP. The level of demand from members of staff to undertake UKRP training events varied between schools.

Schools accommodated the UKRP within the curriculum and timetable in different ways. Most often the UKRP was incorporated into an existing subject area such as PSHE or in one school as part of the English curriculum. In some schools UKRP operated as a separate subject, most often timetabled for one lesson a fortnight throughout the school year. This offered the advantage of the programme not being dependent on fitting in with other subjects or competing for space with other course units, although a fortnightly delivery model was generally unpopular among facilitators. No single model for timetabling the UKRP would fit all schools. If we consider the ideal mode of delivery to be eighteen weekly sessions for groups of not more than 15 pupils then only two out of the nine schools met these criteria in the third year of delivery.

Policy and delivery implications

Here we list potential policy implications of the results presented in this report and the findings of the interim reports. These are aimed at schools or local authorities which use the programme or are considering doing so. Many of these points should be seen as considerations rather than recommendations, but they do highlight issues around the implementation of the programme.

1. The UK Resilience Programme did have a small average impact on pupils' depression scores, school attendance, and English and maths grades, but only in the short run (up to one-year follow-up). There was no average impact on any measure at two-year follow-up. This means that any improvements in pupils' psychological well-being, attendance and attainment were short-lived, and by the time of the two-year follow-up (June 2010) pupils who had participated in UKRP workshops were doing no better on these outcomes than pupils who had not. This suggests that a single set of UKRP lessons is not enough to permanently change pupils' outcomes on average.
2. The impact of the programme varied by pupil characteristics, and was much stronger for more deprived and lower-attaining pupils and those who started the year with worse psychological health, particularly girls with these characteristics. Thus even if there is no average impact of the programme beyond the short run (i.e. an impact when measured over all pupils), it appears that some pupils

benefitted substantially more, and for longer. These findings suggest that the improvements experienced by these pupils were more likely to be meaningful in terms of the impact on their lives, perhaps longer term as well as in the short run.

3. While our quantitative findings suggest there was initially a statistically significant gain in the mental health and well-being of pupils, and many interviewees believed the programme was having a positive impact on their pupils, schools and facilitators should keep in mind the possibility that the programme could have a negative effect for individual pupils.
4. A preferred model of delivery for the UKRP, based on the recommendations of the course developers and the findings of this study, might involve 18 weekly sessions delivered to groups of no more than 15 pupils.
5. For the UKRP to thrive within schools it is extremely important that the programme has backing from the school's senior management.
6. This backing is all the more important when schools face competing pressures such as the need to improve standards of attainment. This may also prove to be the case in relation to financial pressures on schools, for example, if there is a deterioration in pupil: adult ratios.
7. There was evidence of a drift, in some schools, towards the programme being delivered by members of the school auxiliary staff. This will clearly reduce the size of the pool from which facilitators may be drawn which would have an impact on the quality of staff who may train as facilitators.
8. The role of facilitator can be emotionally demanding due to the distressing nature of some real life problems raised by pupils. Staff need to be adequately prepared for and supported throughout the programme in order to deal with these issues.
9. Facilitators were very positive about the quality of training they had received for the UKRP. They had reservations however about the quality of teaching materials provided for the programme. If the materials are not regarded as being of a sufficiently high quality, facilitators may seek alternative resources and clearly this may constitute a threat to programme fidelity.
10. The UKRP was intended to be a universal programme, but some schools have chosen to target pupils for inclusion in workshops. It is not clear which model is preferable, and this will probably depend on the situation of each school. However, the following points are worth bearing in mind:
 - Based on the quantitative analysis, certain groups of pupils appeared to benefit more from the workshops, particularly those who did not achieve the national target level in English and maths at Key Stage 2, pupils with SEN, and pupils who started the school year with higher levels of depression or anxiety symptoms.
 - However, the measured impact on these pupils is the impact of the programme delivered to 'universal' or mixed workshop groups, not of groups consisting entirely of targeted pupils. One cannot therefore assume that the same impact would be obtained if workshop groups were targeted.
 - Although facilitators and other school staff often appeared to assume that higher ability pupils were naturally more resilient, or had fewer problems,

almost all facilitators claimed to use the UKRP skills themselves. It therefore seems unlikely that higher ability pupils or those with better initial psychological well-being would be unable to benefit from the skills.

- Even if pupils were to be targeted for inclusion in workshops, it is important that they should be targeted appropriately. Previous research suggests that school staff tend to identify pupils with behaviour problems rather than those with emotional difficulties, yet the programme is primarily designed to address the latter. The process of targeting would also need to be carefully considered.
- Participation in programmes perceived to be targeted and remedial can attract stigma for those who participate. Universal programmes avoid this.
- The measures used in the quantitative evaluation are sensitive to differences in the severity of symptoms of depression and anxiety, but are not good at distinguishing between children who have few or no symptoms. For instance, they would not be able to detect any improvements in well-being for pupils who showed no initial symptoms of depression, although this would not necessarily mean that these children did not benefit.
- The skills pupils used most (as reported by both pupils and facilitators) were the interpersonal skills around negotiation and assertiveness, and techniques for self-control (see Chapters 5 & 6 of the First Interim Report). Since all pupils are likely to experience conflict and problems around everyday social interactions it is likely that all pupils could benefit from the workshops, at least in these areas.

Additional Information

The full report can be accessed at <http://www.education.gov.uk/publications/>
Further information about this research can be obtained from
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This research report was commissioned before the new UK Government took office on 11 May 2010. As a result the content may not reflect current Government policy and may make reference to the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) which has now been replaced by the Department for Education (DFE).

The views expressed in this report are the authors' and do not necessarily reflect those of the Department for Education.