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Support Groups

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Thank you for your participation

The Research team at the University of Strathclyde would like to thank you very much indeed for taking part in this study.

Initially the group felt strange – it was new to me – but it encouraged me to talk about things I wouldn't normally talk about. It boosted my confidence. It improved my behaviour.
Jack

How did pupils respond to the support group?

Most pupils enjoyed coming along to the support group and enjoyed taking part in the discussions and activities. At the beginning, pupils were anxious about being asked to join a support group, thinking that they were in trouble. However, most pupils settled in quickly to the group.

In most groups, pupils worked well with each other and the Support Group Leader who was leading the group. In a few groups the behaviour of a few pupils made it difficult for others to learn. Most pupils felt quite comfortable about attending the group but a few pupils felt uncomfortable about asking out of class to go to it. A few pupils felt that, at times, they

were missing out on things that were happening in the class but most pupils found the support group worthwhile and were glad that they had taken part in it.

In most groups, pupils felt that they were listened to and that someone cared about them. They were able to talk about things that mattered to them and knew that it wouldn't be talked about outside the group. Pupils developed good relationships with their Support Group Leaders and other pupils in the group. Some pupils said that they would like to take part in another support group when it reached an end.



Using Support Groups to Improve Behaviour

Joan Mowat

The target setting helped me to do things that I hadn't always been able to do before - like spending more time on my homework and taking more care over it.

Jane

I've kind of backed off one of my friends now from the way that he acts. He used to, well he still does, he sometimes skips school and annoys teachers and I try to step away from them and not get involved in all that stuff.

Jack

How did support group pupils respond to target-setting?

Many pupils found target-setting helpful in giving them something to aim towards in improving their behaviour. There were reports from pupils, teachers, Support Group Leaders and parents about how beneficial it had been for some pupils. However, there were some pupils who found it difficult to

remember to get their card or booklet signed, to collect it from their teachers and to take it home to their parents.

A few pupils felt that target-setting made them stand out from other pupils and they felt uncomfortable about this.

What did pupils gain from taking part in support groups?

Although not all pupils had good outcomes, many pupils were able to talk about what they had gained from taking part in the support group.

Developing understanding

Many pupils talked about how they now understood their behaviour more than they had done before and how they had begun to understand their friends, family and teachers more.

Improvements in behaviour

Many pupils were able to give examples of how their behaviour had improved in class and at home. For example, listening more carefully to the teacher, not interrupting the learning of other pupils as much and being able to control their behaviour more effectively. Many pupils felt that target-setting had helped them to achieve this but also the discussions within the group.

Improvements in relationships

Many pupils talked about how their relationships had improved with their friends, their teachers and their family. This was also picked up on by their teachers, their Support Group Leaders and their parents. For example, one boy talked about how he had learned to give others a chance to speak and his mother said that he

was more polite at home and didn't interrupt her so much. Pupils talked about how, even after the group ended, they had been able to go and talk to their Support Group Leader about problems. Pupils noticed that, as their behaviour improved, their relationships with their teachers also got better. Pupils talked about how they were more considerate of friends and more patient with younger (annoying) brothers and sisters. Parents had noticed that their children were more co-operative and helpful at home.

Greater confidence and self-esteem

As pupils noticed these changes in themselves, they became more confident in themselves and had greater self-esteem.

Improved attitudes towards school and learning

Pupils began to see themselves as someone who could learn well and were able to give examples of how their work had improved in specific classes and how they now gave more attention to producing good quality work in the class and at home. Parents also noticed that children were spending more time on their homework and giving greater care to it.

Meet two of our Case Study pupils

There were six case study pupils who took part in interviews after they had finished the support group and who were interviewed again one year later.

Their Support Group Leader, teachers and parents were also interviewed. The real names and photographs of the pupils have not been used.

1 year further on: Martin

"My behaviour has improved. I felt comfortable within the group and enjoyed it. Some of my friends were in it. I was proud of the poster that we made of the Support Group Pledge. .. I didn't feel awkward about having to leave the class to go to the group. Other children weren't saying anything that made you feel uncomfortable."



Pr 6 Project

"The Support group made me feel more part of the school."

"I'm listening better now and not distracting other pupils so much. I think these changes have happened because I've been growing up and the group. It's been fine. I've learned to give everyone else a chance to participate. I've learned that other people are entitled to make a contribution."

His P7 year was a tremendous success. He was engaged and responsible and he seemed to enjoy his time in P7.

[Martin's Support Group Leader]

I would suppose if there's anything I've noticed at home, it's just that, if I'm speaking, he will wait now. He'll not interrupt, you know. That sort a' thing.

[Martin's Mum]

1 year further on: Jennifer

"Definitely don't get into trouble from teachers as much. I'm closer to my friends because I think more about them and how they feel rather than just firing ahead and maybe hurting them with the things I've said just because I'm in a bad mood."



S2 Project

"I am more secure in myself now - less likely to be influenced by other people's views of me."

"Glad I didn't just go to class and just skip it, one, because I was missing Science, and because it really benefited me and others because of the relationships - friends, family, classmates. Benefited all of the people around me. Still see Mrs XXX and have a wee chat with her. It was helpful to have people to go to or the staff that I could talk to."

At the time there was such a big difference in her and I'm positive that she has carried through with it and taking pride in what she is doing.

[Jennifer's Dad]

Support Groups

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If you would like to hear more about support groups you can visit the [website](#) or speak to your teachers at school.