

Minister announces more funding for the Mentors in Violence programme

✘ During a visit to Tynecastle High School earlier today the Justice Secretary has announced another tranche of funding for the popular Mentors in Violence Prevention Scotland Programme (MVP). This money will provide extra training staff for the scheme.

Mr Matheson visited the school to meet with the programme's American founder Jackson Katz and some of the young people benefitting from the work.

Mr Katz is internationally recognized for his groundbreaking work in the field of gender violence prevention and created MVP to raise awareness and challenge thinking around gender, sex and violence. The programme has been running in Scotland since its launch at Portobello High School in 2011.

We spoke to the Justice Secretary about the programme during an earlier school visit to [Craigroyston](#).

The project involves training staff working with senior pupils, in their fourth, fifth and sixth years at the school to become "peer mentors" who then go on to deliver the programme to their younger counterparts in a safe and informal environment.

Mr Matheson said: "The MVP programme is already doing fantastic work to educate young people about anti-violence prevention methods and encourage them to feel confident about speaking out against all forms of violent behaviour.

"It discusses a range of issues targeted at different age groups including bullying, domestic abuse, sexual harassment

and sexual assault and has already shown effectiveness in empowering young people to support and even challenge friends.

“This additional £450,000 of funding will be used to employ more full time dedicated training staff to build on the progress already made and extend the scheme to even more schools and communities throughout Scotland.

“Prevention through education is fundamental to tackling the root causes of violence and crime and the MVP programme teaches young people ways of challenging situations that they feel uncomfortable with in a safe way.

“It’s not about encouraging people to break up fights or become involved in violent situations but about teaching young people that we all have a responsibility to challenge the culture that can lead to violence in the first place.”

Jackson Katz PhD, founder of the Mentors in Violence Prevention Programme said: “The Scottish Government’s decision to support an expansion of MVP is a very exciting development.

“I’ve always maintained that young people are eager to address the problems of harassment, abuse and bullying proactively, if those of us in educational leadership provide them with the tools and opportunity to do so.

“With this support from the Justice Secretary and an impressive group of committed students and educators, Scotland stands poised not only to reduce violence, but potentially to set a really positive example for the rest of us.”

Chief Inspector Graham Goulden, coordinator of the MVP Scotland programme added: “It is great to see the MVP Programme going from strength-to-strength thanks to the support of the Scottish Government and our partners.

“We know that tackling attitudes towards violence is key to continuing Scotland’s downward trend in violent crime. It’s

also crucial that issues such as domestic abuse and dating violence are a priority.

“The provision of this new funding is crucial to allow MVP to continue to be developed in schools currently using the programme as well as reaching into new schools and local authority areas in 2016. Violence isn’t inevitable, it is preventable and together we can make Scotland safer for all.”

Jacquie Ramsay, Depute Head Teacher at Tynecastle High School: “MVP equips our students with the skills and confidence to know that as empowered bystanders they can do something to prevent all forms of bullying and gender based violence.

“I am in no doubt that this will allow our students to develop a more resilient attitude to life, which will reap long-term benefits for them as they grow and move on from school into adult life and a positive destination.”