

The nurtureuk Violence Reduction Unit programme: Exploring a model for reducing school exclusions and instances of youth violence through nurture practice

Andrea Middleton

Corresponding author: Andrea Middleton, andrea.middleton@nurtureuk.org

Keywords: nurture groups, nurture practice, violence reduction, school exclusions

Submitted: 21 January 2022 Accepted for publication: 15 June 2022

Abstract

Previous research exploring the causative risk factors of youth violence have determined that a combination of individual, relationship, community and societal factors contribute to the occurrence of this complex phenomenon. Viable solutions must address all of these levels to be effective and to sustainably prevent instances of youth violence. Nurture practice is an evidence-based solution that has been shown to effectively identify and address the social, emotional and mental health needs of young people in schools – thereby reducing distressed behaviour and exclusions – and increasing wellbeing. This study uses a focus group methodology to collect the observations of project leaders from schools actively engaged in the nurtureuk Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) programmes, piloted in London, and in Kent and Medway, to gain insight into their experiences of the programme at its mid-point, and to assess implementation progress and effectiveness. Thematic analysis of the transcribed narrative accounts indicate that the range and structure of programme offer is meeting the needs of participating schools and that some positive impacts have been observed on the ground. These results suggest that nurture practice may be well placed to offer a viable and sustainable model for preventing exclusions, thereby reducing instances of youth violence.

Data availability statement: The data that support the findings of this study are available on reasonable request from the corresponding author.

Introduction

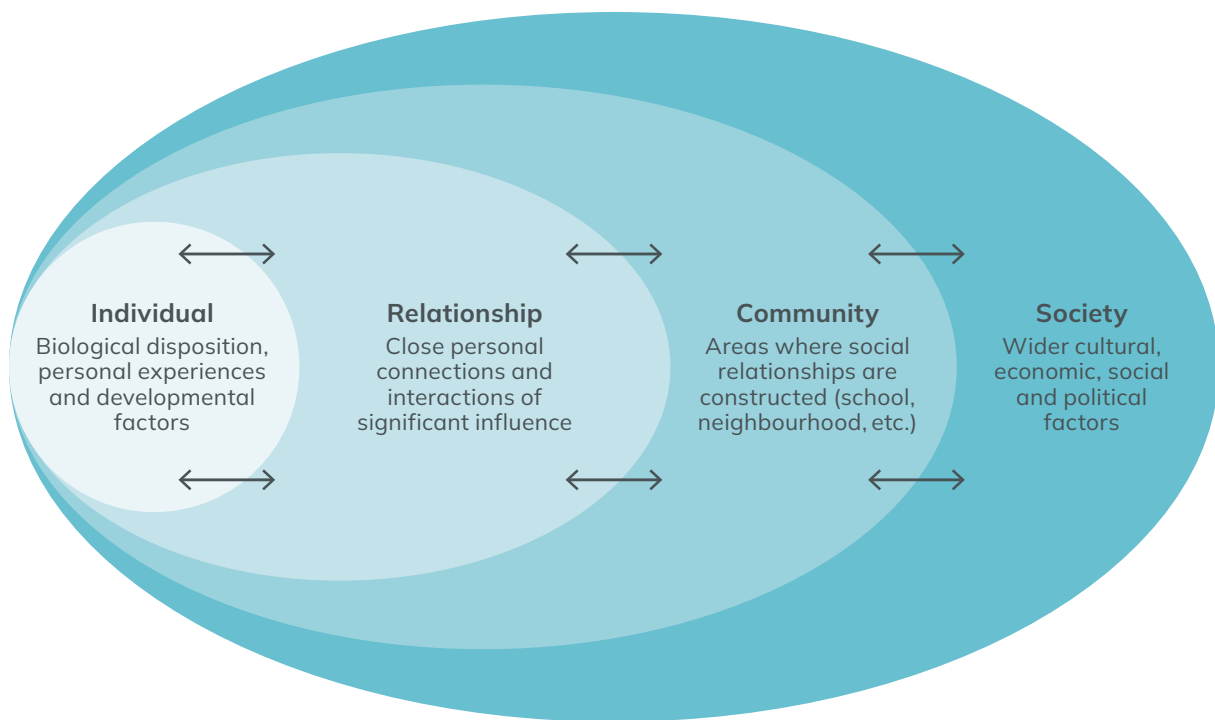
According to the World Health Organization (WHO), youth violence is a serious worldwide health problem which can be defined as acts of violence (bullying, physical fighting, sexual and physical assault, and homicide) involving children, adolescents and young people between the ages of 10 to 29, all of which contributes to the global burden of death, injury and disability (WHO, n.d.; Rez et al, 2001). Previous research has reported that worldwide, both the main victims and perpetrators of violence are themselves adolescents and young adults (Rez et al, 2001;

Krug et al, 2002). Based on Brofenbrenner's 'ecology of contexts' approach (Brofenbrenner, 1979, p. 131), the WHO developed a public health model (Figure 1) for identifying interconnected risk factors for violence and antisocial behaviour, which it published in its *World Report on Violence and Health* (WHO, 2002). The model describes the risk factors as occurring within each of the four levels of a young person's life – individual, family, community and societal – recognising that these factors influence the lives of young people and have significant effects on their behaviour (Rez et al, 2001). A public-health approach is a long-term and sustainable outlook that provides a holistic view in

understanding the roots of serious violence, thereby offering the opportunity to identify and develop effective solutions to address the wide-ranging causative factors (Fraser & Irwin-Rogers, 2021).

“We owe our children – the most vulnerable citizens in any society – a life free from violence and fear. In order to ensure this, we must be tireless in our efforts not only to attain peace, justice and prosperity for countries, but also for communities and members of the same family. We must address the roots of violence. Only then will we transform the past century’s legacy from a crushing burden into a cautionary lesson.”
 Nelson Mandela (Krug et al, 2002, p. ix)

Figure 1
Ecological model of integrated levels of influence related to violence and antisocial behaviour



Note. This model depicts overlapping spheres illustrating the factors situated within interconnected levels of influence occurring within a young person’s environment. Adapted from WHO, 2002, *World Report on Violence and Health*.

Youth Violence in the UK

It is estimated that in England and Wales in the period of 2007-2018, the total social and economic costs of serious youth violence was between £6 billion and £11 billion, with figures increasing significantly year-on-year (Irwin-Rogers et al, 2020). These statistics capture some of the devastating adverse effects that instances of

youth violence have on individuals, communities and on all the services connected to them. In response to the rising levels of serious youth violence, the Youth Violence Commission (YVC) was established by the UK government in 2016 with the following aims: to identify the root causes of youth violence, to identify solutions to address the risk factors identified, and to drive changes in policy and practice (Irwin-Rogers et al, 2020). Following extensive evidence gathering and consultation with a range of stakeholders, the YVC published an interim report in 2018 setting out its recommendations to create change. The YVC’s findings and recommendations resulted in both the regional and national government adopting a

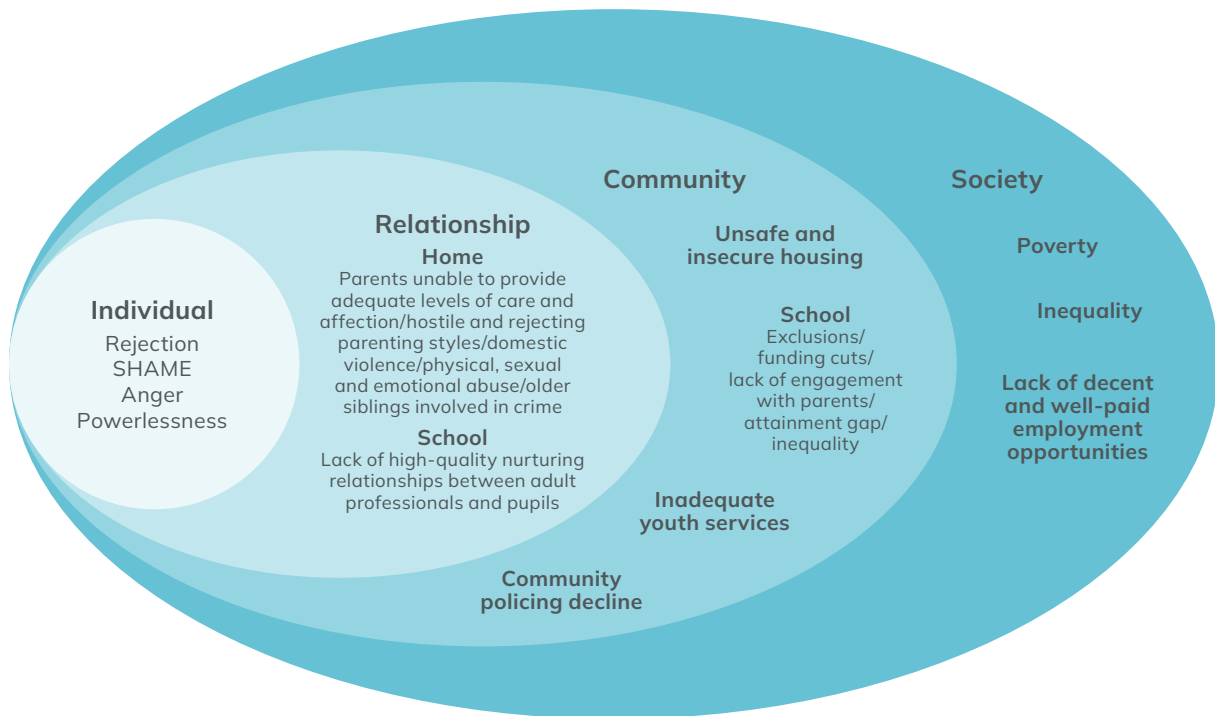
public health approach to address the causes and responses to violence, and in the establishment of 18 regional Violence Reduction Units (VRUs) as the vehicle to drive the changes (Mayor of London, 2021). Inspiration and insight for the VRUs were drawn from the experience of previous successful violence prevention work done in Scotland, where the world’s first VRU was founded in 2005 (Hassan, 2020).

The YVC, in collaboration with researchers and academics, undertook a review of the existing body of evidence pertaining to the causes of youth violence, gathering and analysing new data generated from a national survey of over 2,200 young people, and compiling expert evidence following a series of sessions. In 2020, published its final report detailing its findings and recommendations for action (Irwin-Rogers et al, 2020). Using the WHO ecological model once again as a conceptual framework for orientation purposes, by reflecting the four levels of influence on the lives of young people, the findings of

the YVC final report on the identified factors contributing to youth violence are summarised in Figure 2.

The report highlighted several significant factors including the recognition of emotions, most notably shame, as a fundamental and significant factor in violent behaviour (Thomas, 1995; Gilligan, 2003); exposure to adverse childhood experiences which are implicated in the likelihood of both future violence perpetration and victimisation (Fox et al, 2014; Duke et al, 2010); and the lack of the formation of high-quality, nurturing relationships between young people and adult educational professionals at schools, from the early years and beyond (Irwin-Rogers et al, 2020). One of the most significant risk factors identified by the YVC as contributing to youth violence was the disengagement and exclusion (including fixed-term exclusions, suspensions, permanent exclusions, and ‘off-rolling’) of young people from mainstream education (McLean Hilker & Fraser, 2009; Perera, 2020; Timpson, 2019).

Figure 2
A multilevel depiction of the causes of youth violence in the United Kingdom



Note. An ecological view of the risk factors for increased likelihood of young people perpetrating or becoming victims of serious violence identified in the Youth Violence Commission Final Report (Irwin-Rogers et al, 2020).

Literature Review

Exclusions as a factor in youth violence

It is reported that since 2015 there has been a 60% increase in the number of pupils permanently excluded from England's schools – an alarming average of 42 exclusions per day and 410,000 suspensions in the year 2017-2018 alone (Partridge et al, 2020). A recent literature review undertaken by the Department for Education (Graham et al, 2019) mirrored the findings of a study undertaken by the RSA in 2020 (Partridge et al). It revealed that certain vulnerability factors (individually and/or combined) increased a young person's risk of exclusion, including having special education needs or disability (SEND), having social emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs, having grown up in poverty, having been in care or looked after, and having experiencing trauma and challenges in their home lives.

A national survey conducted in 2017 (Sadler et al, 2018) determined that children with a mental health disorder are five times more likely to have speech, language and communication needs (SLCN), a reality that is sadly reflected in the youth justice service, which reports that between 60-90% of the youth offending population in England and Wales have speech, language and communication needs (Simak, 2018). The resulting distressed and challenging behaviour these figures represent have been cited amongst the reasons for sharp rise in exclusion rates across the educational pathway beginning in primary school (Timpson, 2019), and are implicated in the causative factors of youth violence (Department for Education, 2018). In its 2017/18 annual report, the Inspectorate of Prisons for England and Wales revealed that 89% of children in prison at that time were excluded from school before their detention (HM Inspectorate of Prisons, 2018). Earlier research conducted in Scotland found that pupils excluded from school at the age of 12 were four times more likely than their peers to be jailed as adults (McAra & McVie, 2010).

The Pinball Kids report (Partridge et al, 2020) identified the importance of relationships between school staff and pupils and concluded that exclusions were 'one of the clearest manifestations of the breakdown in relationship between a

young person and the other members of their school community' (Partridge et al, 2020, p. 5). The researchers highlighted that practices that invested in building trusting relationships between influential actors in children's lives were the most promising of interventions in preventing exclusions. They further identified the conditions necessary for a reduction in exclusion within schools including: the formation of strong relationships with trusted adult(s) in school; the engagement of parents as partners in their child's education; assessment of SEND and SEMH needs and appropriate support throughout the school journey; and for schools to have an inclusive ethos where all young people are known to them (Partridge et al, 2020).

Nurture Practice as a restorative solution for challenging behaviour

In the literature, the term 'nurture practice' is generally described as an approach based largely on an understanding of attachment theory, child development theory and the impact of trauma and early adversity, and takes into account current advances in the fields of developmental psychology and neuroscience (Education Scotland, 2018). Using the healing potential within trusting, attuned and connected relationships, nurture practice empowers adults in school to allow children and young people to engage with missing early nurturing experiences, thereby supporting the development of social and emotional skills whilst also supporting behaviour, wellbeing, attainment and achievement (nurtureuk, n.d.; Education Scotland, 2020). Nurture practice encompasses the whole school community (including children/young people, staff and parents), is firmly rooted in the six principles of nurture, and can be applied at both the universal and the particular level within the school environment (Education Scotland, 2020).

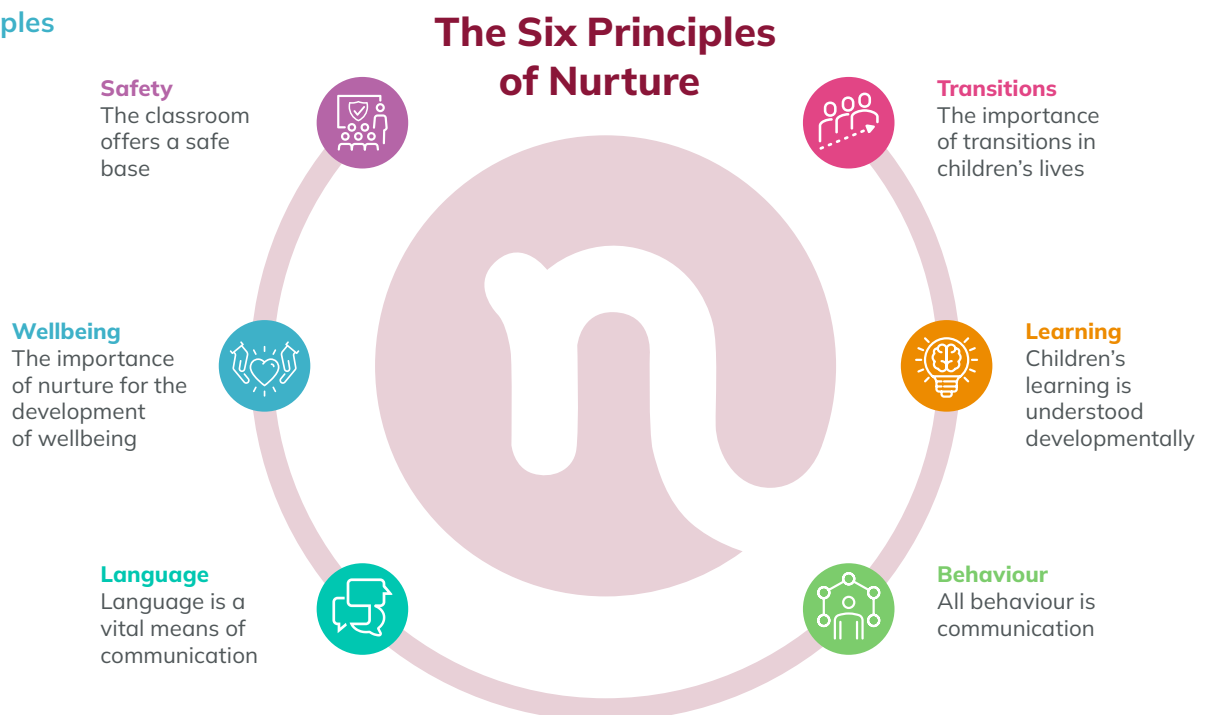
Nurture practice is based primarily of the theory of attachment first devised by the British psychiatrist and psychotherapist, John Bowlby, in the 1950s (Boxall, 2010). Attachment theory acknowledges that to grow up mentally and relationally healthy, a young child needs to experience a responsive, warm, intimate and continuous relationship with a secure attachment figure in their early years, who then becomes a safe base from which the child can explore the environment and the wider world (Bowlby, 1988; Schaffer, 2003). The theory also acknowledges the link between attachment

and the development of emotional literacy skills in childhood and suggests that a child's ability to self-regulate (control and management of impulses and strong emotions), to develop empathy and to acquire social skills (building reciprocal connections with others, listening and sharing) is significantly influenced by their attachment history (Cassidy, 1994; Nanu, 2015). Previous research has established that trauma experienced in childhood can negatively impact a young person's social, emotional and cognitive development (Thomas, et al, 2019). A trauma-informed approach in schools reflects an awareness of both the context and role which educational professionals play in hindering or facilitating healing for young people who have experienced trauma (Harris & Fallot, 2001). Adopting this approach in schools ensures that the young people in the environment feel physically and emotionally safe, prioritises the building of relationships and understands the ways in which trauma responses can manifest in distressed behaviour, thereby effectively reducing trauma symptoms and leading to positive behaviour change (Hickle, 2020).

Nurture practice originated with the establishment of the first Nurture Group (NG) in the late 1960s by the educational psychologist, Marjory Boxall,

in Hackney, London. These school-based groups were developed for young children who had seemingly experienced 'some disruption or distortion' (Lucas, 2019, p. 8) in their key early development experiences and so were unable to meet the expectations and demands of the mainstream class. The Nurture Group is a 'targeted psychosocial intervention' (Middleton, 2021, p. 37) and is designed to provide a safe base (Boxall, 2010) and to bridge the gap between the child's home and school by facilitating the opportunity for recreating the missed early experiences through trusting, supportive and nurturing relationships with specially trained teachers and staff (Education Scotland, 2018). Drawing on the documented observations and direct experiences of the early Nurture Group teachers and educational psychologists, The Six Principles of Nurture (see Figure 3) were conceptualised over a period of approximately 20 years of nurture practice (Lucas, 2019). The principles are based on perspectives of organisational and group theory (Saad & Kaur, 2020) and in their essence are relational and holistic, capture the ethos and atmosphere of a nurturing early developmental environment and encapsulate all the essential components that made Nurture Groups successful.

Figure 3
The Six Principles
of Nurture

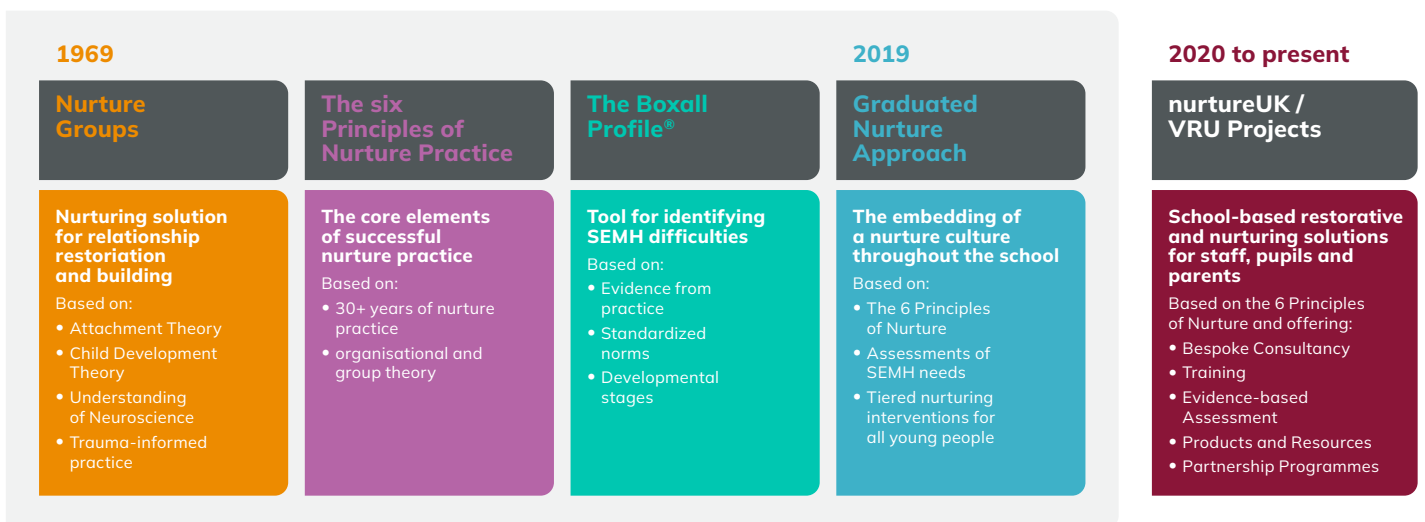


The Boxall Profile® originated from Nurture Group practice (Lucas, 2020) and is a practical tool that allows teachers and other educational professional to assess specific areas of need by identifying developmental gaps in a child's social and emotional skills that cause distressed behaviour (Ruby, 2020), and is considered to be one of the most frequently used assessment tools in schools across the UK (Ruby, 2021). A model for a whole-school nurture approach was proposed by Mackay et al (2015) and further developed into the graduated approach to nurture, offering nurturing solutions for the full range of SEMH needs of children within a school community, ranging from universal applications of nurture practice to addressing the needs of the most severe level of difficulties. A growing body of evidence confirms that when nurturing principles have been applied throughout schools – and when nurturing attitudes and practices are adopted by all school staff in a wider approach, and in response to local need

– positive impacts for all children, including reduced exclusions, are observed (Middleton, 2021; March & Kearney, 2017; Colwell & O'Connor, 2003; Doyle, 2004).

A present-day example of the expansion of understanding and application of nurture practice is the recent partnership programmes developed between nurtureuk and two Violence Reduction Units (VRUs). The Nurturing London Project, in partnership with the Mayor of London's VRU, nurtureuk is working with 31 schools, (primary and secondary schools, alternative provision and further education colleges included), across 15 boroughs in that city. Similarly, the Nurturing Kent and Medway Project is a partnership programme between nurtureuk and that region's VRU, working with nine secondary schools to support them in embedding a nurturing culture throughout their settings (nurtureuk, n.d.; Simpson, 2020).

Figure 4
A visual representation of the evolution of nurture practice from 1969 to the present day



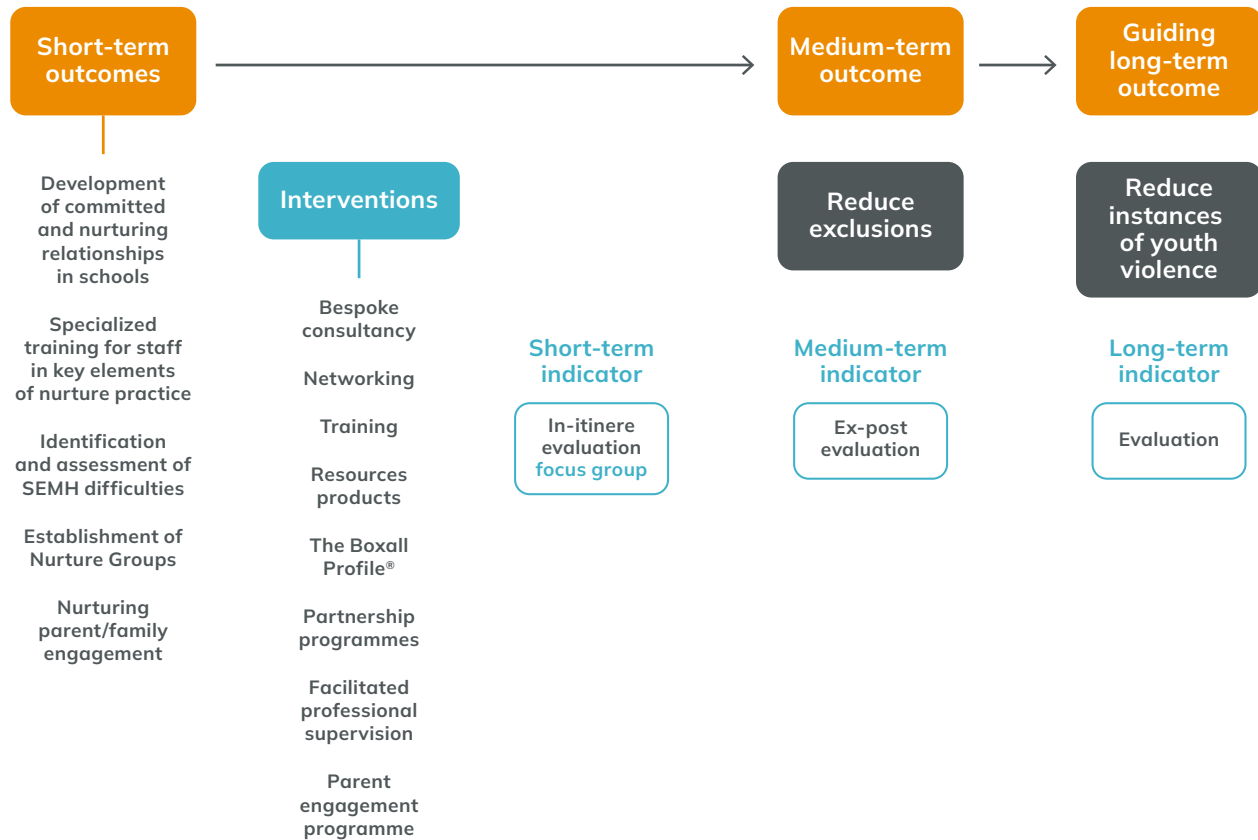
Theory of change is a methodology used to evaluate complex community initiatives focused on social change and, when used within the context of a specific project, can be applied to articulate the underlying rationale and to support the planning, implementation and evaluation of the initiative (Anderson, 2005). The theory of change underpinning the nurtureuk VRU programmes

(see Figure 5) is based on the evidence-based understanding of the underlying causes of youth violence and proposes an 'ecological' (Ward et al, 2013, p. 1) response. Using bespoke consultancy, training and nurturing solutions to restore and build trusted relationships in school through a greater understanding of attachment, child development and trauma-informed practice –

and underpinned by the Six Principles of Nurture practice – the nurtureuk VRU programmes aim to reduce instances of school exclusion and youth

violence in local communities. A summary of the full programme offer structure is set out in Appendix 1.

Figure 5
Pathway of change towards guiding outcomes for nurtureuk VRU programmes



Aim of the study

The aim of this study was to explore the observations and perceptions of school staff actively participating in the nurtureuk VRU programmes piloted in London and Kent and Medway from 2020 to 2022 and to gain insight into their experiences of the programme at its mid-point. The findings would allow for the assessment of the short-term project indicator outcomes and would provide a means to monitor implementation progress, evaluate effectiveness of the solutions offered and to identify areas for development for the remainder of the project implementation.

Research approach

A critical realist epistemological position, which aims to find and report the experiences, meaning and reality of participants, was adopted for the

purposes of this study (Bhaskar, 2008). A focus group is an interdisciplinary qualitative research technique for information gathering, using non-standardised data collection procedures, and based on informal discussion among a group of people selected on the basis of specific characteristics, outlined according to the research objectives (Acocella & Cataldi, 2021). This technique is attached to a phenomenological approach concerned with the lived cognitive experiences, or subjective understanding, of the participants' own experiences (Petersma, 2000).

Participants

All 40 schools engaged in the nurtureuk VRU programmes were invited to participate in the study by means of a research recruitment flyer emailed each of settings' Project Leaders. An opportunity sample consisting of a total of nine

participants, representing eight schools (four from London and four from Kent and Medway), volunteered to participate in the study, with seven participants attending the virtual focus groups and two participants submitting written responses electronically. The primary inclusion criteria for participants prescribed that they be school

leaders with direct responsibility for implementing the project in their settings. A range of different school settings, including mainstream primary, mainstream secondary and alternative-provision secondary, were represented by participants holding a variety of professional roles.

Table 1
Participant roles and setting types

Participant roles	Setting type	Number
Senior leadership		
1 Operations executive	Alternative Provision, Secondary	3
2 Deputy headteachers	Mainstream, Secondary	
Head of department	Mainstream, Secondary	1
Inclusion leadership	Mainstream, Secondary	1
Safeguarding lead	Mainstream, Secondary	2
SEMH lead	Mainstream, Secondary	1
Nurture lead	Mainstream, Primary	1
		n=9

Data collection

The validity of the focus group method of data collection as traditionally conducted for group interactions occurring in the same physical location is well reported in the literature (Kitzinger, 1995; Morgan & Krueger, 1993, as cited in Matthews et al, 2018). However, recent advances in digital communication technologies mean there is a growing use of online video-conferencing facilities for qualitative data collection (Matthews et al, 2018). As this study was seeking to explore the experiences and opinions of participants located in different regions of the country, this online video-conferencing method for data collection aligned well with the aim of this research. Organisation and allocation of participants to a group was arranged according to their indicated availability to attend one of three facilitated virtual focus groups of 1½ hours duration, held between July and August 2021. Group 1 consisted of three participants; Group 2 consisted of three participants; and Group 3 consisted of two participants. A discussion outline containing six salient and open-ended questions was designed

to include aspects considered most relevant for the cognitive objectives of the study and were provided to participants prior to their attendance. The six questions for discussion were:

- 1 How well do you think this project meets the needs of the children/young people in your school?
- 2 Does being part of the VRU project give you/your colleagues the knowledge and confidence to be able to support the children/young people in your school more effectively?
- 3 To what extent, if any, has the relationship you/your school has developed with your lead consultant helped you to understand and adopt nurturing practices as part of this project?
- 4 Have you seen any visible changes in the school or witnessed any positive impact on the children/young people as a result of the training or resources that staff have been offered as part of this project?

- 5 How has the Covid pandemic changed or altered (positively and negatively) your school's practice in terms of the relationships with your students, parents, families and the wider community?
- 6 What obstacles or challenges, if any, have prevented you or your school from benefiting more from the project?

Participants accessed their allocated focus group session via webcam. All focus groups were audio and video recorded with Zoom® software and saved to digital files. The audio from each focus group session were transcribed verbatim for later analysis, whereafter the digital files were deleted.

Ethical considerations

This study was carried out in accordance with the ethical guidelines for educational research as set out by the British Educational Research Association (2018) and was approved by the Research and Ethics Committee of nurtureuk. Voluntary participants were sent a brief description outlining the purpose and objectives of the study, whereafter written informed consent was obtained. Participants were notified of their right to withdraw from the study at any time until data reporting. Confidentiality was maintained by the anonymisation of all participant data and in compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation and the Data Protection Act 2018, all raw data collected in the form of transcripts, research notes, etc., were stored securely for the duration of the study. Each focus group session was moderated by a facilitator and an assistant; both remained visible to the participants via webcam for the duration, and all participants reaffirmed their consent to participate verbally at the start of the session. On conclusion of each session, the moderator remained online for an additional period of time to allow individual participants the opportunity to address any issues or concerns. The findings of the study, in the format of an executive summary, will be distributed to all focus group participants by email upon completion.

Analysis

Deductive thematic analysis was conducted for the purposes of this study to process the information collected from the transcripts of the focus groups. This was achieved by searching across the data set to observe patterns strongly linked to the data and to recognise repeated patterns of meaning (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Following data familiarisation, the thematic analysis of the transcript data was conducted manually using an 'In Vivo' coding approach using the words of participants as an open code (Saldaña, 2016). The initial coding information was generated from thematic patterns emerging from the data. A second round of coding highlighted convergences and divergences on the same theme and allowed for the initial codes to be grouped thematically. Coding information was then sorted, similar codes merged and duplications eliminated. Themes were then reviewed and revised with four distinct themes and 12 sub-themes generated from this process and conceptualised in the form of a reading grid. Reliability and consistency of the data findings was achieved by obtaining feedback from colleagues working in the VRU team, the programme manager and from extended engagement with the research throughout data collection and analysis. Dependability was achieved by the use of memo writing to record and reflect on the data analysis process, and the consistent engagement of the programme manager in the review of data collection and analysis.

Findings

The findings of the data analysis have been presented as thematic maps, with a visual representation of themes and sub-themes identified from the data set. Guided by the emergent concepts, each theme and sub-theme has been summarised and interpreted and is presented in narrative format below.

Box 1**Thematic map in relation to Theme 1: Meeting needs**

Theme	Sub-themes
Meeting needs	<p>1.1 Pupils</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme is meeting needs of pupils, including the most vulnerable • The Boxall Profile® is effective in identifying needs • Impact is observed in improved behaviour and attendance and fewer exclusions <p>1.2 School</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Philosophy and principles of programme fits school vision • Value of the project <p>1.3 Staff</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased interest and discussion amongst staff have led to reduced exclusions • Change of attitudes has resulted in better engagement • Positive impact observed in nurturing interventions resulted in wider application of nurture practice by staff

1.1 Pupils

Participants reflected that taking part in the programme met the current and long-term needs of their pupils, including more vulnerable pupils with long-term support needs.

“...the project provides a fantastic opportunity for our school to be able to support our students and assess their needs in greater depth.” (FGP3)

The Boxall Profile® was helpful in assessing the needs, at the right time, for groups of children requiring additional support, and in the planning of targeted solutions for these pupils.

“The part of the project I feel is most beneficial is the Boxall assessment. I feel that this opens up a wider range of interventions we will be able to use in order to support all students’ needs on a variety of levels.” (FGP3)

“Already it is clear that it will provide us with effective measurement, identification and review frameworks [which] will allow us to measure the progress and effectiveness of applied interventions.” (FGFP8)

Positive impact was reflected in individual pupil behaviour with a reduction in verbal abuse towards staff, improved attendance and fewer permanent exclusions reported since the start of the project.

“We have used [nurturing practice] in a small area to begin with and have seen a reduction in verbal abuse towards staff.” (FGP5)

“Two boys who were looking at permanent exclusion now come in... and are doing so well.” (FGP7)

1.2 School

At the start of the project, it was not clear whether the project was needed, but the philosophy and principles of nurture had been found to fit the vision and school context and had provided a structure to offer long-term support.

“The philosophy and principles of [the programme] meet the needs of our school context and has led to a review of how we approach inclusion and supporting all learners, but especially our most vulnerable.” (FGFP9)

Participants value the opportunity to be involved in the project knowing that it meets the needs of their pupils.

“We knew by looking at the criteria [of the programme] it 100% meets the needs. We knew the value and feel really blessed to have this... it fits with us.” (FGP1)

1.3 Staff

Participants observed that increased interest and discussion amongst staff members – particularly around nurture and attachment theory in relation to specific students – had prevented exclusions that might have otherwise have happened.

“It’s prevented two boys from permanent exclusion... The staff all looked at the six principles to decide what were our strengths and weaknesses. It’s allowed for staff discussion around nurture and attachment theory.” (FGP7)

There were changes observed in relation to the attitude of some staff towards pupils, in that staff appeared more positive towards pupils with more complex needs. Staff appeared more willing to engage with these pupils in their classes and were more willing to plan for, find solutions and work with them.

“Staff who wouldn’t have them in their class before are now outside with them and able to give [them]

praise... staff are excited – they want to work with them.” (FGP7)

“Many colleagues [now] think again about how they plan lessons and engage with our learners to help them access the learning and connect with school...” (FGFP9)

Improvements in the behaviour of pupils attending targeted nurturing interventions has been observed by teachers and school leadership. Looking ahead, if impact became more visible, nurture practice would expand and be rolled out more widely departments throughout the settings.

“The Head[teacher] is impressed and wants to push it out further next year using [nurture practice] in bigger groups.” (FGP5)

“Come September there will be a team of teachers, one in each department – they volunteered – this will then be rolled out in every department. If the impact is shown, then more will be allowed.” (FGP5)

Box 2
Thematic map in relation to Theme 2 – Relationships

Theme	Sub-themes
Relationships	2.1 Partnership with lead consultant
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expert knowledge guides, supports and motivates • Understanding context • Provision of coaching, support and guidance • Pivotal in understanding six principles • Ideas and planning
	2.2 Connection
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationships forged with other schools through networking
	2.3 Parents
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationship changed by pandemic

2.1 Partnership with lead consultant

Participants observed that lead consultants (LCs) have shared their passion, their expert knowledge and their personal experiences of nurture practice to guide, support and motivate participants to implement changes and develop nurturing strategies and plans for their schools.

“[We] couldn’t be without [the LC] – she’s instrumental! You can tell she’s doing it because she believes in it – she’s amazing!” (FGP1)

“[The LC] has listened intently to our ideas and projects and has provided us with support and guidance.” (FGP4)

The LCs' familiarity with the specific context of the school allowed them to find tailored training and strategy solutions to best meet the needs of the staff and students in each setting.

"[They] understand our school context and works with us to provide access to the best training to support key members of staff in delivering programmes and support for all our learners." (FGFP9)

"What [the LC] suggests is so relevant to our children. She's tweaked what we do and made it so much better. [She] has given me confidence!" (FGP7)

Lead consultants helped to develop the knowledge and confidence of staff by providing invaluable coaching and acting as a 'sounding board' for thoughts and ideas during virtual meetings.

"Gave us lots of ideas; whatever is asked gets delivered and more! [They] put things into intelligent, practical terms." (FGP6)

Participants describe the relationship forged with LCs as pivotal in terms of understanding the principles of nurture and how to best employ them throughout their settings. The opportunities to connect with LCs through regular virtual and face-to-face meetings helped developed partnerships and allowed for the sharing and generation of practical ideas for and step-by-step implementation of plans.

"The relationship with our consultant has been pivotal in developing our understanding of nurturing principles and how we can employ them." (FGFP8)

The meetings with the LC have generated a range of practical ideas that help to identify next steps and adapt strategies to support pupils more effectively.

"[They've] always got good ideas and she has really helped to adapt strategies." (FGP5)

"Gave us lots of ideas; whatever is asked gets delivered and more! [They] put things into intelligent, practical terms." (FGP6)

2.2 Connection

Monthly networking events were considered to be a helpful opportunity to connect with colleagues from other schools, to share ideas and resources, and to discuss common strengths and challenges.

"[The meetings] have given us a lot more knowledge and contacts... the networking meetings are amazing!" (FGP7)

"The networking events have been really helpful to share ideas, resources and pitfalls." (FGP4)

2.3 Parents

Due to staff taking on more pastoral duties during school closures in lockdown, including home visits, etc, participants reported that the more nurturing engagement with families during this time resulted in parents having an improved understanding of the work done in schools, improved communication and improved home-school relationships.

"... the pandemic has improved the relationships with our parents and students. I feel that this is because things have had to change to keep everyone safe... it has given families a greater understanding of the work that goes on within a school setting... it has brought about a greater sense of community and working together." (FGP3)

"The Boxall Profile® helps to structure conversations with parents." FGP6

"Parents are more forthcoming and it's helped break down barriers. It's changed a lot of parents' attitudes." FGP5

Box 3**Thematic map in relation to Theme 3: Knowledge development**

Theme	Sub-themes
Knowledge development	3.1 Staff training <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to specialist training sessions expanded and developed knowledge • Wide range and structure of training developed knowledge and confidence
	3.2 Addressing pupil needs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Boxall Profile® gives insight allowing targeted intervention
	3.3 Resources/products
	3.4 Self-reflection <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The six principles generated and facilitated discussion

3.1 Staff training

The access and convenience of virtual training for staff on specialist subjects including attachment theory, youth violence and trauma, was valued. The training complemented existing knowledge, provided additional knowledge and increased the confidence of staff to meet the needs of pupils.

“It has added to already experienced staff’s knowledge and confidence and it’s definitely getting stronger.” (FGP6)

“[The training has] made it possible to address needs – particularly around youth violence and drugs. It has given us a lot more knowledge.” (FGP7)

Training events were considered to cover a wide range of subjects, were well-structured, and the resources provided to accompany training sessions were of an excellent standard and helpful in intervention work. Specialist trainers, particularly those with teaching expertise, inspired staff and helped them to develop their knowledge and confidence.

“The training events have been well-structured and resourced.” (FGP4)

3.2 Addressing pupil need

The Boxall Profile® was considered to be one of the most beneficial aspects of the project as it allowed deeper insight into pupils’ needs, thereby allowing for more targeted intervention. Individual staff members as well as whole-staff groups

(e.g. teaching assistants) were trained in use of the Boxall Profile® and there was wide usage of the online platform to assess and measure the needs of individual children and young people (CYP) including those with SEND and larger groups of CYP, including whole-school groups).

“... we have trained all TAs, set them up on the [Boxall Profile®] online platform and they have then completed profiles and started intervention work. This has opened up a wider range of intervention work and resources to use as well as new assessment and measurement tools.” (FGFP8)

3.3 Products and resources

The products and training resources offered as part of the project provided staff the opportunity to try a wider range of solutions during interventions that supported various levels of student needs.

“[The] Bereavement Box is an amazing resource that we’ve used for pupils who have suffered bereavement.” (FGP1)

3.4 Self reflection

The six principles of nurture practice generated discussion and facilitated opportunities for wider self-reflection amongst staff, although this was not always considered to be an easy process.

“The staff all looked at the six principles to decide what were our strengths and weaknesses. It’s allowed for staff discussion around nurture and attachment theory.” (FGFP6)

3.1 Staff training

The access and convenience of virtual training for staff on specialist subjects including attachment theory, youth violence and trauma, was valued. The training complemented existing knowledge, provided additional knowledge and increased the confidence of staff to meet the needs of pupils.

“It has added to already experienced staff’s knowledge and confidence and it’s definitely getting stronger.” (FGP6)

“[The training has] made it possible to address needs – particularly around youth violence and drugs. It has given us a lot more knowledge.” (FGP7)

Training events were considered to cover a wide range of subjects, were well-structured, and the resources provided to accompany training sessions were of an excellent standard and helpful in intervention work. Specialist trainers, particularly those with teaching expertise, inspired staff and helped them to develop their knowledge and confidence.

“The training events have been well-structured and resourced.” (FGP4)

3.2 Addressing pupil need

The Boxall Profile® was considered to be one of the most beneficial aspects of the project as it allowed deeper insight into pupils’ needs, thereby allowing for more targeted intervention. Individual staff members as well as whole-staff groups (e.g. teaching assistants) were trained in use of the Boxall Profile® and there was wide usage of the online platform to assess and measure the needs of individual children and young people (CYP) including those with SEND and larger groups of CYP, including whole-school groups)

“... we have trained all TAs, set them up on the [Boxall Profile®] online platform and they have then completed profiles and started intervention work. This has opened up a wider range of intervention work and resources to use as well as new assessment and measurement tools.” (FGFP8)

3.3 Products and resources

The products and training resources offered as

part of the project provided staff the opportunity to try a wider range of solutions during interventions that supported various levels of student needs.

“[The] Bereavement Box is an amazing resource that we’ve used for pupils who have suffered bereavement.” (FGP1)

3.4 Self reflection

The six principles of nurture practice generated discussion and facilitated opportunities for wider self-reflection amongst staff, although this was not always considered to be an easy process.

“The staff all looked at the six principles to decide what were our strengths and weaknesses. It’s allowed for staff discussion around nurture and attachment theory.” (FGFP6)

4.1 Obstacles and challenges

Workload pressures caused by the demand of role changes during the pandemic, and limited staff resources impacted the staff’s ability to engage fully with the project.

“The school closure has not helped. Changes in school, dealing with children’s issues – everything is new for everyone! Workload pressures and very busy timetables [have been an obstacle].” (FGP5)

“We wanted to do everything, but not it’s not possible – we haven’t got the staff resources.” (FGP7)

The pandemic and school closures disrupted timetables, thereby affecting the staffs’ ability to integrate new knowledge learning, and delayed the implementation of actions, ideas and strategies generated from the programme.

“The only major obstacle has been time to implement the project.” (FGFP8)

Due to a lack of time to attend training and develop confidence in adapting new ways of working, staff can be resistant to adopting a new understanding of complex needs and it can be difficult to get them on board with nurturing practice. This is a result of their already extremely demanding workloads and the lack of staffing resources to allow them to attend training.

Box 4**Thematic map in relation to Theme 4: Obstacles and challenges**

Theme	Sub-themes
Obstacles and challenges	4.1 Obstacles <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engagement affected by demands due to the pandemic Time to implement knowledge Staff attitudes to adopting nurture practice affected by heavy workloads
	4.2 Challenges <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mental health and wellbeing of whole school community Time needed to expand nurture practice

"[The project lead] struggles to give the team confidence. [She] feels like she's hitting a brick wall. Mainly because it's new [and] they are busy with complex roles and needs. Time is needed in order to properly take it in and lean and they haven't got this." (FGP5)

4.2 Challenges

The pandemic disrupted and weakened social existing support mechanisms which negatively affected the whole school community. Pupils and parents were impacted by bereavement and increased anxiety resulting in more safeguarding referrals being made by school staff. Staff felt that they lack the specialised training but felt pressurised to address the deeper needs of families in addition to fulfilling their teaching roles, negatively affecting their wellbeing.

"Safeguarding referrals are through the roof!" (FGP6)

"Teachers have had to become counsellors and deal with the socio-economic needs as well as teach. Training is needed for the staff in order to help more." (FGP5)

More time is needed to broaden existing nurture practice into the wider school, which can be achieved by school leaders prioritising opportunities for staff to attend training.

"We need more time... trying to expand it across the whole school – it's a challenge!" (FGP2)

"Getting leadership to give time [due to] lack of funds [for] staff training and the resistant teachers." (FGP6)

Discussion

The findings of this study suggest that at this point in programme delivery, the range and structure of project offer is currently meeting the expectations of the participating schools. Schools recognised the value of joining the programme as the philosophy of nurture corresponded to their vision of meeting the needs of all pupils, and was opportune as they previously lacked the support and resources to realise their vision.

As the project is still in the early stages of implementation in schools due to the effects of the pandemic, evaluation of impact by staff is limited, but the initial signs are positive. Staff report improvements in outcomes of some individual pupils and observe their progress in engagement and in developing emotional literacy skills and resilience, which has protected them against possible exclusion. Since the implementation and development of nurture practice, changes in staff attitudes towards pupils has been observed, with some staff appearing more positive towards and more willing to engage with pupils who have more complex needs. As staff have developed their knowledge and skills around nurture practice through training, they feel more confident to identify pupils in need of additional support and feel more capable of applying solutions that will have positive impact. Engagement with the project until now has established the foundations for further developing nurture practice in schools, including expanding nurture practice into all learning departments, and planning for the establishment of on-site Nurture Groups.

The need for the early identification of SEMH difficulties among pupils is well recognised in the

literature (Department for Education, 2018). Doing so allows for both the understanding it provides to inform the nature and level of support and intervention, and the ability to detect undiagnosed needs. The pandemic has created a changed educational landscape, demanding the need for schools to 'think beyond conventional and recognised categories of vulnerability' (Daniels et al, 2020, p. 8) Staff in schools participating in the project are more able to identify and assess the needs of all pupils, including the most vulnerable and those more at risk of exclusion, and they are more confident in their ability to support them. The Boxall Profile® is a beneficial tool that is being used to identify needs in greater depth, to measure progress and to assess the effectiveness of interventions attended by pupils after assessment. Many staff members participating in the project, including teachers and teaching assistants, have already been trained in the use of The Boxall Profile® Online and are using the tool to complete profiles for individual pupils with SEND, groups of pupils and in some cases throughout the whole school.

The importance of supportive relationships in developing a safe base that offers the capacity to respond to challenges and to explore solutions has been discussed earlier in this paper. This does not only apply to young people, but also to the significant adults in their environments who exert influence over them. Access to knowledgeable, experienced and passionate experts in the form of the nurtureuk lead consultant (LC) is valued by schools. Regular virtual and face-to-face meetings provide coaching, guidance and support and also offer opportunities to generate and share ideas that facilitate developing and adapting practical strategies to address pupil need. In the context of this project, the relationships developed between school project leads and their LC have found to have been instrumental in the staff's development of understanding of the six principles of nurture and how they can be implemented throughout the setting. The understanding of the unique context of each school is further recognised as being pivotal to the successful implementation and development of nurture practice within the schools. The self-audit conducted at the start of the project, with the support of the LC, is a meaningful process that facilitates self-reflection and highlights strengths and weaknesses in practices. It also generates wider discussions amongst staff about inclusion,

nurture and attachment. Connections established with other schools taking part in the project through regular networking meetings are valued as they allow for the recognition of common challenges and facilitate the sharing of ideas and resources.

It is not only long-term changes in behaviour amongst young people, but also changes in behaviour amongst the significant figures who influence young peoples' lives, that ultimately should lead to a sustainable reduction in violent behaviour (DIZ, 2010). A wide range of well-structured training opportunities increased the knowledge and confidence of staff – in particular, training focused on attachment theory and trauma-informed practice available to all staff allows them to deepen their knowledge and develop their skills. Training further increases awareness in staff and facilitates a different understanding of the contexts of pupils' lives. Some staff report feeling more empowered to identify the underlying needs of their pupils that may be reflected in challenging behaviours, allowing for alternative approaches to be considered. With persistent disruptive behaviour still cited as the most common reason for both fixed-term and permanent exclusions by schools in England (GOV. UK, 2021), training and knowledge-development that allows for implementing restorative solutions that reach the root of the needs, and in doing so prevent further escalation, is imperative.

It is not yet possible to assess the impact of the pervasive disruptions and changes that the recent Covid-19 pandemic caused in the lives of children and young people, but as many were unable to attend school, suffered bereavement and increased stress due to family hardship, the consequences are already being reflected in the increase of safeguarding referrals initiated by school staff. The increased needs of pupils and their parents caused by psychological effects of the pandemic weighs heavily on school staff, and the increased demand for support has weakened already vulnerable available support systems. School staff are recognised as the principal agents of change in that they constitute the point of contact for the development of nurturing practice, with the ensuing benefits circulating onward to pupils and parents. Acknowledging the established link between teacher wellbeing and pupil outcomes, it is alarming to note the

record levels of stress, burnout and anxiety among staff reported due to increased workloads and responsibilities since the pandemic began (Scanlan & Savill-Smith, 2021). Expectations that already overwhelmed staff should find the capacity for additional training and additional responsibilities to support the needs of their pupils is not practical or sustainable and must be an important consideration throughout the remainder of the project. The recommendations of existing research to address this issue include the increased funding for schools to appoint trained mental health professionals in all primary and secondary schools (Irwin-Rogers et al, 2020), but this aspiration is not likely to be realised for some time.

Limitations

Although the study provided essential informative insight into participant's experiences of an ongoing project, caveats regarding the methodology must be taken into consideration. The study presented the views of a limited sample size of project leaders, which may have resulted in some sampling bias. Recruiting a larger sample size that included participants with more varied roles and responsibilities throughout the settings would have enhanced the study, and triangulating data using case studies from participating schools would have increased the validity and rigour of the findings. Several disadvantages of focus group methodology are acknowledged in the literature (Smithson, 2000) which may also affect the validity, meaningfulness and generalisation of the study results, eg, potential moderator bias and self-selection of participants.

Additionally, the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic and its effects upon both the methodology of the study and on the participants taking part in the programme require acknowledgement. The use and effectiveness of virtual focus groups, as opposed to face-to-face participation, has been discussed in the literature (Acocella & Cataldi, 2021), however consideration must be given to how this adaption may have affected outcomes. Participants also described some significant changes in their working environments and roles during the pandemic, which may have influenced their experiences of the programme and affected the outcomes of this study.

Conclusion

The purpose of the current study was to gather the observations of a sample of participants from settings actively engaged in the nurtureuk Violence Reduction Unit programmes, to gain insight into their experiences of the programme at its mid-point, and to assess implementation progress and effectiveness. Results based on a small sample size reveal some positive impacts of the programme thus far and highlight areas for discussion and development for the remainder of the programme delivery.

A review of the literature has determined that the causative factors influencing the prevalence of youth violence are complex. Existing research has established that solutions aimed preventing this phenomenon can only be sustainable and successful if the individual needs of each young person are addressed with an accompanying understanding of the context of their social environments. In order to affect changes in behaviour that lead to violent outcomes, risk factors within the whole ecology of their environments must be minimised, and protective factors increased. Research highlighted in this study confirms that nurture practice addresses the risk factors at an individual level through its ability to identify the underlying causes of distressed behaviour and address them at an early stage. Anecdotal evidence from more than 50 years of nurture practice, together with outcomes from small scale studies suggests that it can be effective in reducing instances of exclusions (Bennett, 2015). The link between the exclusion of CYP and poor outcomes, including becoming the victims and/or perpetrators of violence, has also been highlighted in the literature review. The nurtureuk VRU programme builds upon the successful violence prevention work, using nurture practice, that started in Scotland 15 years ago. The evidence from that work clearly establishes that the development of nurturing relationships between CYP and the significant adults in their school and home environments buffer them from developmental disruption caused by adverse experiences and provide the framework from which to develop the cognitive skills and emotional resources necessary to for their physical, social and emotional wellbeing, thereby changing the conditions that may lead to violent behaviour and exclusion.

This study provides unique preliminary insight into the application of nurture practice as a viable and sustainable model for violence reduction and makes an original contribution to the expansion of nurture practice that can be corroborated in further investigation and future research.

Acknowledgements

I dedicate this work to my parents, Joan and Rodney Maddocks, whose nurturing hands inspired my practice; and to my brother, Noel Maddocks, whose untimely passing inspired my journey to nurture for a more connected and peaceful world.

Disclosure statement

Nurtureuk employed the author over the course of the study as an independent consultant. In accordance with my ethical obligation as a researcher, I am reporting that I am a consultant to nurtureuk who may be affected by the research reported in the enclosed paper.



References

- Acocella, I., & Cataldi, S. (2021). *Using Focus Groups: Theory, Methodology, Practice*. London: Sage.
- Anderson, A. A. (2005). *The Community Builder's Approach to Theory of Change: A practical guide to theory development*. Aspen Institute Roundtable on Community Change. Retrieved from https://www.theoryofchange.org/pdf/TOC_fac_guide.pdf
- Bennett, H. (2015). Results of the systematic review on Nurture Groups' effectiveness: How efficient are Nurture Groups? Under what conditions to Nurture Groups work best? *The International Journal of Nurture in Education*, 1(1), 3-7.
- Bhaskar, R. (2008). *A realist theory of science*. London: Verso.
- Bowlby, J. (1988). *A Secure Base*. Abingdon: Routledge
- Boxall, M. (2010). *Nurture Groups in Schools: Principles and Practice*. (S. Lucas & Nurture Group Network, Eds; 2nd ed.). London: Sage. (Original work published 2002)
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101.
- British Educational Research Association. (2018). *BERA ethical guidelines for educational research* (4th ed.) Retrieved from <https://www.bera.ac.uk/publication/ethical-guidelines-for-educational-research-2018>
- Brofenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development: Experiments by nature and design*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Brofenbrenner, U. (1994). Ecological models of human development. In U. Brofenbrenner (Ed.), *International Encyclopedia of Education* (pp. 1643-16470). Elsevier Sciences. (Reprinted from *Readings on the development of children*, 2nd ed, pp. 37-43, by M. Gauvain and M. Cole, Eds, 1993. New York, USA: Freeman Press).
- Cassidy, J. (1994). Emotion Regulation: Influences of attachment relationships. *Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development*, 59(2-3), 228-249.
- Colwell, J., & O'Connor, T. (2003). Understanding nurture practices – a comparison of the use of strategies likely to enhance self-esteem in Nurture Groups and normal classrooms. *British Journal of Special Education*, 30(3), 119-124.
- Daniels, H., Thompson, I., Porter, J., Tawell, A., & Emery, H. (2020). *School exclusion risks after Covid-19*. Economic and Social Research Council. Retrieved from http://www.education.ox.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Daniels-et-al.-2020_School-Exclusion-Risks-after-COVID-19.pdf
- Department for Education. (2018). *Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools*. Retrieved from https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/755135/Mental_health_and_behaviour_in_schools_.pdf
- (DIZ) Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) GmbH. (2010). *Systemic prevention of youth violence: A handbook to design and plan comprehensive violence prevention measures*. Retrieved from file: [///C:/Users/middl/Downloads/GIZ-Systemic-Prevention-Youth-Violence-handbook_english_32%20\(1\).pdf](///C:/Users/middl/Downloads/GIZ-Systemic-Prevention-Youth-Violence-handbook_english_32%20(1).pdf)
- Doyle, R. (2004). A social development curriculum: Applying Nurture Group principles and practices to support socially and emotionally vulnerable children within mainstream classrooms. *British Journal of Special Education*, 31(1), 24-30.
- Duke, N., Pettingell, S., McMorris, B., & Borowsky, I. (2010). Adolescent Violence Perpetration: Associations with multiple types of Adverse Childhood Experiences. *Pediatrics*, 125(4), 778-786.
- Education Scotland. (2018). *Nurture, Adverse Childhood Experiences and Trauma Informed Practice: Making the links between these approaches*. Retrieved from <https://education.gov.scot/improvement/self-evaluation/inc83-nurture-adverse-childhood-experiences-and-trauma-informed-practice#>
- Education Scotland. (2020). *Applying nurture as a whole school approach: A Framework to support the self-evaluation of nurturing approaches in schools and early learning and childcare (ELC) settings*. Retrieved from <https://education.gov.scot/improvement/self-evaluation/applying-nurture-as-a-whole-school-approach-a-framework-to-support-self-evaluation>
- Fox, B., Perez, N., Cass, E., Baglivio, M., & Epps, N. (2014). Trauma changes everything: Examining the relationship between Adverse Childhood Experiences and serious, violent and chronic juvenile offenders. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 46, 163-173.
- Fraser, A., & Irwin-Rogers, K. (2021). A public health approach to violence reduction [Strategic

- Briefing]. Dartington Trust. Retrieved from <https://changingviolence.org/publications/strategic-briefing-public-health-approaches-to-violence-reduction>
- Gilligan, J. (2003). Shame, Guilt and Violence. *Social Research*, 70(4), 1149-1180.
- GOV.UK. (2021, July 29). *Academic Year 2019/20: Permanent exclusions and suspensions in England*. Retrieved from <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/permanent-and-fixed-period-exclusions-in-england>
- Harris, M., & Fallot, R. D. (Eds). 2020. Using trauma theory to design service systems. New directions for mental health services. *New Directions for Mental Health Services* 89(1). Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/232450640_Using_trauma_theory_to_design_service_systems_New_directions_for_mental_health_services
- Hassan, G. (2020). *Violence is preventable, not inevitable: The story and impact of the Scottish Violence Reduction Unit*. Scottish Violence Reduction Unit. Retrieved from http://www.svru.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/VRU_Report_Digital_Extra_Lightweight.pdf
- Hickle, K. (2020). A brief introduction to trauma informed practice. University of Sussex. Retrieved from https://padlet-uploads.storage.googleapis.com/69931745/9e7ef0631dad776e0a9cf159ec61b66d/A_brief_introduction_to_Trauma_Informed_Practice_KRISTI_10_11_2020.pdf
- HM Inspectorate of Prisons. (2018). *HM Chief Inspector of Prisons for England and Wales Annual Report 2017-18*. Retrieved from https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/761589/hmi-prisons-annual-report-2017-18-revised-web.pdf
- Irwin-Rogers, K., Muthoo, A., & Billingham, L. (2020). *Youth Violence Commission Final Report*. Youth Violence Commission. Retrieved from https://ebc743b2-5619-4230-8e01-421540c665fc.filesusr.com/ugd/ad2256_a0f38547a4134e0cb923905486bcc186.pdf
- Krug, E. G., Dahlberg, L. L., Mercy, J. A., Zwi, A. B., & Lozano, R. (Eds.). (2002). *World report on violence and health*. World Health Organization. Retrieved from https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/42495/9241545615_eng.pdf
- Lucas, S., Insley, K., & Buckland, G. (2006). *Nurture Group principles and curriculum guidelines*. Wigan: Nurture Group Network.
- Lucas, S. (2019). On the origins of nurture. *The International Journal of Nurture in Education*, 5(1), 7-11.
- Lucas, S. (2020). On the origin of The Boxall Profile®: How practitioners contributed to its development. *The International Journal of Nurture in Education*, 6(1), 6-12.
- MacKay, T. (2015). Future directions for nurture in education: Developing a model and a research agenda. *The International Journal of Nurture in Education*, 1(1), 33-40.
- March, S., & Kearney, M. (2017). A psychological service contribution to nurture: Glasgow's nurturing city. *Emotional & Behavioural Difficulties*, 22(3), 237-247.
- Matthews, K. L., Baird, M., & Duchesne, G. (2018). Using online meeting software to facilitate geographically dispersed focus groups for health and workforce research. *Qualitative Health Research*, 0(00), 1-8. Retrieved from file:///C:/Users/middl/Downloads/Matthews18Video.pdf
- Mayor of London. (2021). *A report on the London Violence Reduction Unit produced for the home office*. Greater London Authority. Retrieved from https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/a_report_on_the_london_violence_reduction_unit_produced_for_the_home_office_march_2021.pdf
- McAra, S., & McVie, L. (2010). Youth crime and justice: Key messages from the Edinburgh Study of Youth Transitions and Crime. *Criminology and Criminal Justice*, 10(2), 179-209.
- McLean Hilker, L., & Fraser, E. (2009). *Youth exclusion, violence, conflict and fragile states*. Social Development Direct. Retrieved from <http://gsdrc.org/docs/open/con66.pdf>
- Middleton, T. (2021). Nurture in secondary schools: What recognitions in OFSTED reports. *The International Journal of Nurture in Education*, 7, 37-44.
- Nanu, D. E. (2015). The attachment relationship with emotional intelligence and wellbeing. *Journal of Experiential Psychology*, 18(2), 20-27.
- Nurtureuk. (n.d.). *What is nurture?* Retrieved January 10, 2022, from <https://www.nurtureuk.org/what-is-nurture>

- Nurtureuk. (n.d.). *Violence Reduction Units*. Retrieved January 11, 2022, from <https://www.nurtureuk.org/who-we-work-with/violence-reduction-units>
- Partridge, L., Landreth Strong, F., Lobley, E., & Mason, D. (2020). *Pinball Kids: Preventing school exclusions*. RSA. Retrieved from <https://www.thersa.org/reports/preventing-school-exclusions>
- Perera, J. (2020). *How black working-class youth are criminalised and excluded in the English school system: A London case study*. Institute of Race Relations. Retrieved from <https://irr.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/How-Black-Working-Class-Youth-are-Criminalised-and-Excluded-in-the-English-School-System.pdf>
- Pietersma, H. (2000). *Phenomenological Epistemology*. Cary, USA: Oxford University Press.
- Rez, A., Krug, E. G., & Mercy, J. A. (2001). Epidemiology of violent deaths in the world. *Injury Prevention*, 7, 104-111.
- Ruby, F. J. M. (2020). British norms and psychometric properties of the Boxall Profile® for primary school-aged children. *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties*, 25(304), 215-229.
- Ruby, F. J. M., (2021). Identifying preschool children's social emotional and mental health difficulties: validation of the Early Years Boxall Profile® (EYBP). *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties*, 4, 425-435.
- Saad, N., & Kaur, P. (2021). Organisational theory and culture in education. Oxford Research Encyclopedia. Retrieved January 11, 2022, from <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190264093.013.665>
- Sadler, K., Vizard, T., Ford, T., Marcheselli, F., Pearce, N., Mandalia, D., Collinson, D. (2018). *Mental Health of children and young people in England, 2017*. Retrieved from <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/mental-health-of-children-and-young-people-in-england/2017/2017>
- Saldaña, J. (2016). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. London: Sage.
- Scanlan, D., & Savill-Smith. *Teacher Wellbeing Index 2021*. Education Support. Retrieved from <https://www.educationsupport.org.uk/media/qzna4gxb/twix-2021.pdf>
- Schaffer, R. (2003). *Introducing Child Psychology*. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons.
- Simak, G. (2018). *Why does communication in youth justice matter?* (Record ID: oai:ethos.bl.uk760220) [Doctoral theses, Bangor University]. Retrieved from [https://research.bangor.ac.uk/portal/en/theses/why-does-communication-in-youth-justice-matter\(830e658d-3809-4b4a-8be5-04da10e9e5ea\).html](https://research.bangor.ac.uk/portal/en/theses/why-does-communication-in-youth-justice-matter(830e658d-3809-4b4a-8be5-04da10e9e5ea).html)
- Simpson, F. (2020, December 3). Kent and Medway Violence Reduction Unit launch nurturing schools partnership. Retrieved from <https://www.cypnow.co.uk/news/article/kent-and-medway-violence-reduction-unit-launch-nurturing-schools-partnership>
- Smithson, J. (2000). Using and analysing focus groups: Limitations and possibilities. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 3(2), 103-119.
- Thomas, H., E. (1995). Experiencing a shame response as a precursor to violence. *Bulletin American Academy Psychiatry Law*, 23(4), 587-593.
- Thomas, M. S., Crosby, S., & Vanderhaar, J. (2019). Trauma-informed practices in schools across two decades: An interdisciplinary review of research. *Review of Research in Education*, 43(1), 422-452.
- Timpson, E. (2019). Timpson Review of School Exclusion. Department for Education. Retrieved from https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/807862/Timpson_review.pdf
- Ward, C. L., Dawes, A., & Matzopoulos, R. (2013). Youth violence in South Africa: Setting the scene. In C. L. Ward, A. van der Merwe & A. Dawes (Eds.), *Youth Violence Sources and Solutions in South Africa* (pp. 1-20). (Print edition first published 2011. Claremont, South Africa: University of Cape Town Press).
- World Health Organization (WHO). (2002). *World report on violence and health: Summary*. Retrieved from https://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/violence/world_report/en/summary_en.pdf
- Youth Violence Commission. (2018). *Interim Report July 2018*. Retrieved from https://ebc743b2-5619-4230-8e01-421540c665fc.filesusr.com/ugd/ad2256_d4b4f677734a4a4b86cb5833cfcee53f.pdf

Appendix 1

nurtureuk Violence Reduction Unit programmes offer structure

Project duration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two-year delivery
Participation	<p>Nurturing London VRU programme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 31 educational settings across 13 boroughs (13 x primary schools; 8 x secondary & sixth form schools; 8 x secondary schools; 2 x further education colleges; 1 x all-through provision, 2 x alternative provision settings/pupil referral units) <p>Kent & Medway VRU programme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nine secondary schools <p>Senior leaders from borough Behaviour and Inclusion teams designate schools to participate in the programmes, based on various criteria, including: school exclusion data, community youth violence data, SEMH pupil need, etc.</p>
What the educational settings provide to ensure the programme's success	<p>The oversight of the programme from the senior leadership team, with one staff member appointed as project leader (PL) who is responsible for co-ordinating the programme roll-out and for managing programme progress throughout the setting</p>
What nurtureuk provides	<p>Bespoke consultancy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each setting is assigned a highly experienced nurtureuk lead consultant (LC) who acts as a consistent guide for the PL's and staff through the two-year programme framework, providing a solution-focused approach to creating an inclusive school environment. LC's aim to model best practice in different scenarios and ensure all nurturing approaches are provided in each settings individual context. • The LC works with PLs in each setting to complete a facilitated self-audit of the settings current nurturing practice, designed to act as a benchmark and to track progress throughout the programme delivery. • Using information from the audit, alongside additional data from the setting, including baseline attendance, attainment and exclusions, etc, the LC designs a bespoke consultancy package tailored to each settings specific needs and goals and aimed at reaching the programme's short-term outcomes. • The package consists of 10 days of time-flexible, virtual or in-school consultancy, as well as variety of options of nurturing solutions (see below). • Regular progress meetings are held between the LC and PL during programme delivery to determine progress, review each settings Action Plan, evaluate the success of implementing the principles and to plan for providing further support, if necessary. <p>Nurturing solutions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A wide range of training course options. • A selected range of products to support nurture practice. • Monthly networking meetings where participating schools can connect, share and develop knowledge on specialist subjects relating to the programme. • Specialist partnership programmes to deliver targeted training and support for staff.

