

DRAFT
**Evaluation of Safety Net's
Playground Buddying Programme**

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Summary

This evaluation report focuses on Safety Net's Playground Buddying Programme (PBP). It provides an overview of the experiences of children, school staff and others working in the area of bullying prevention in Brighton over the last five years. Since the start of the PBP Safety Net has worked with 26 Primary schools across Brighton and Hove. An innovative programme to prevent bullying in school playgrounds has been adopted in 25 of these schools.

It is evident from discussions with a sample of children, school teachers and staff and other agencies concerned with bullying prevention that the PBP has a significant impact. The experiences and perceptions of children and staff confirm the impact this programme has had.

Lessons are continually being learnt about the scope for ongoing improvement and development of this programme and the best approach to roll it out across schools in Brighton and Hove. This report includes some recommendations for the future development of The PBP

Approach to Evaluation

This report includes the experiences of 78 people who were interviewed for this evaluation of The PBP. 70 of those included were children from three schools. This includes meetings with three groups of playground buddies in three schools and interviews with 8 children who are not playground buddies. The children were fairly evenly split between girls and boys. 5 staff working in schools were interviewed and there were interviews with 3 people who work with either statutory or voluntary organisations and have a specific interest or remit around bullying preventions

Two templates of questions were developed, one for children and one for professionals. These questions aimed to understand the impact of PBP on children, school staff, schools as a whole and others working around bullying prevention.

A comprehensive overview of the context for this evaluation was gained through discussions with Safety Nets Schools Programme Staff, the Safety Net Director and a review of documents. This included The PBP aims and objectives, plans, monitoring reports and national and local policy documents relevant to this evaluation. In addition to gaining an understanding of the context of the work of the PBP in Brighton and Hove in relation to local, regional and national strategies.

Background

Brighton and Hove is a diverse city with regard to areas of multiple deprivation and relative prosperity. 6 of the schools that PBP worked with are located in East Brighton. This area of Brighton is identified as an area with high levels of multiple deprivation with high levels of social housing, families out of employment and training, lone parents, high levels of health needs, and children with special educational needs. The three key primary schools in the

area have an average of 51% of children with special educational needs (Brighton and Hove average is 23%)

Safety Net is a locally based voluntary sector organisation. It provides innovative services in the field of promoting safety and wellbeing for children, young people and families in Brighton. The Schools Programme is one of Safety Net's three programmes. The others are Family Link and Training. The PBP is one of the key activities of The Schools Programme. Since 2003 the Schools Programme has worked with 26 Primary schools and 3 secondary schools across Brighton and Hove. During the last year 400 children have participated in playground buddy training. In addition safety through circle time training has been delivered to 760 children.

Safety Net primarily works in the area of prevention and early intervention. This is based on the view that by working with children and families at an early stage of problems it is possible, in many instances, to prevent them escalating to a more serious level. This would then require more intense intervention, when children and families are less likely to engage, it is more costly and there is much less likelihood of a positive outcome for children and families.

The Schools Programme in common with Safety Net's Family Link and Training Programmes endeavors to work closely with children, families, schools, community groups and in partnership with the local authority. Safety Net's independence, as a voluntary sector organisation, is valued by service users and other organisations who work with it. Generally it is accepted that this enables a positive engagement and helps break down some of the stigmas around support for children and their families both at home and school.

The PBP was developed in response to discussions with children around feeling safe at school. Significant concerns were raised by children around playtimes being unstructured and feeling unsafe. The children attributed this to the following range of concerns:

- Changing friendship circles
- Isolation
- Lack of activities
- Incidents of bullying
- Not feeling listened to by their peers and adults

In addition it responds to Safe at Schools Surveys which identified that 90% of primary children who are bullied say they are bullied in the playground. Also The Local Area Agreement identifies the need for programmes to address bullying in the city's schools.

The Schools Programme is currently working on a pilot peer support package which has been jointly commissioned by the Healthy School Team and Extended Schools. It involves working across six cluster schools, delivering buddy programmes and peer mediation training. This innovative piece of work

has been identified by Extended Schools as a “successful approach across schools for staff and children in clusters to work together.”

The Playground Buddy Programme Model

The central ethos of The Playground Buddy Model is to work with schools, to strengthen the confidence and skills of children, staff and schools as a whole. The programme equips children and staff with a proactive, preventative approach to address the reality and concerns around bullying in schools. The work starts from the basis that a coordinated approach within each school can reduce the unease, upset and fear caused by bullying.

The PBP works in partnership with schools; development of joint work is central to the approach. Schools, their staff and children sign up to this programme after discussions across the school community to decide if they want to set up a PBP

Playground buddies are selected in two ways. Either a class teacher nominates children that they feel would be suitable or alternatively all children are given the opportunity to apply. In their application they are asked to focus on two questions:

- Why do you want to be a Buddy?
- What skills can you bring to the role of a Buddy?

The Playground Buddies take part in a six-week training programme. The attempt is to train groups of children across the year groups with a view to the Buddy Programme becoming a whole school approach. The aim of the training is to help make the playground feel like a safer place for everyone. A personal safety programme called Protective Behaviours is key to this. It teaches children to recognise and respond to their internal feelings (early warning signs) when they feel unsafe. Protective Behaviours also encourages children to identify a network of supportive adults (a Helping Hand) who they can turn to if they feel unhappy, worried angry or unsafe. Through a combination of games, listening skills and role play the PBP aims to raise awareness of issues around bullying and aims to provide some practical solutions for children.

The buddies help other children by:

- Introducing inclusive games
- Helping out with playground equipment where appropriate
- Helping children who are hurt by taking them to first aid
- Seeking the help of an appropriate adult when necessary (for example when there is a fight)
- Approaching and talking to children who look lonely or upset

The expectation on the school is that a staff member is identified as a lead and champion for the programme. This could be a teacher, midday supervisor, learning mentor and/or SENCO lead. They will attend the buddy training sessions. It is also expected that this person would lead on

subsequent training for new buddies in the school using the buddy training programme materials developed by the Safety Net's Schools Programme.

The PBP is promoted through regular assemblies, individual classes and in newsletters sent home.

Children's Experiences and Perception

Discussions took place with children in three schools. The children in school Y were trained 3 years ago. In this school we spoke with PBs and a separate meeting with children who had been helped by PBs. The PBs in school X were trained last year. Those in school Z were completing their circle time playground buddy training.

Children's views of the PBP

In school X children were chosen by a class teacher. They were asked by a teacher and then received a letter informing them that they had been chosen to train as a PB. They worked with this teacher in the development of the PBs.

In school Y the children found out about the PB scheme at an assembly. All those who wanted to apply were told that they would have to fill in an application form and have an interview. There was space for questions in the hall and the children were told that if they had other questions they could approach the teacher who made the announcement. The children recalled feeling excited and interested in the idea of PB's.

In both schools it was evident that the children who were going to do the PB training were excited and upbeat about becoming a PB.

Children's perceptions of training

In school Y the children recalled many of the games and said they still used those techniques 3 years on. They recalled games, for example fruit salad which they used when there were problems with playing together. The PB's described how they were taught to talk to people who were fighting and to try and resolve differences. They described when they needed help and support from a teacher. Many of the Buddies talked about the exercises which explored feelings, specifically around if a child was getting bullied. They did exercises designed to identify things to do and games to play if another child was feeling sad. The group talked about mental awareness, safe and unsafe areas and exercises which listed what to do and what not to do as a PB.

In school Z it was evident that children remembered a repertoire of games and approaches that they might use in the playground. They also described their better understanding of their own feelings and emotions. They could identify warning signs of, for example, anxiety and stress both for themselves and other children in the playground. The children in all the schools the children commented on how useful they found the role plays as an opportunity to test out situations and consider how they might address situations that arise.

All the PB's in schools X, Y and Z expressed their approval that someone outside of the school came in to deliver the PB training. They said they liked to know they were part of a wider PB scheme. It provided an opportunity to find out how other schools were doing with the PB system from someone who had been into other schools. They said it's good to have someone who doesn't know us do the training. Having someone unfamiliar seemed to

somehow 'free' the children up to step out of any role or identity they already had in the school.

"It was also like you could explain about the school and us to someone who didn't know you".

It also seemed that working across the school with an outside trainer created a sense of co operation through out the school. It provided another opportunity for confidence building and using their interpersonal skills

"We could get on with new people while being a PB"

The pupils also said it felt like there was an "expert "coming in to teach them a special skill. It seemed to give more status/kudos in the children's minds and the children picked up a sense of greater responsibility.

Key Learning for the Children

The key learning for the children centred on their own and others' emotional responses including a better understanding of bullying behaviour and why children feel sad or lonely. As well as tools and techniques to address different situations and working as part of a team

In school Y all the children talked about having a greater understanding about their own and other people's feelings. They learnt how to think about and identify feelings and how to approach other children they thought might be feeling sad or lonely. There was a good awareness throughout the group of the things to avoid such as not pushing too hard if someone doesn't want to talk, other techniques to encourage children to engage and also when to leave someone alone. This understanding seemed to be reflected in the descriptions shared by other children such as learning how to look for warning signs of people who are not feeling happy for example.

They were also able to look at feelings both their own and others and to recognise that others don't necessarily feel the same way they would about similar things. Some of the exercises that stood out for the children in school X were The Gingerbread Man focussing on identifying feelings such as anxiety and feeling sick inside and having butterflies. As well as Traffic Lights and Swap Places where a group were asked to stand if they shared an experience or answered in the affirmative to a question, they would then swap places with each other. The exercise helped children to recognise similarities and differences between them and to understand that differences exist.

One of the challenges highlighted by the children was when they stepped out of a game, they were sometimes not allowed back into it. In one school the issue of how they played together when a PB might need to leave a game to was successfully addressed in the school assemblies.

One PB said that she thought it was useful to understand that she could "play with my friends and be a playground buddy". This seemed to come as a relief, and could allude to an anxiety about a role which could alienate a PB from their friends or perhaps separate from their group. For others the fact that

training took place across the school years meant that there was a growing confidence amongst the PBs

“I play with other people now, before I used to just play with my friends”.

In school X the children were very keen and eager to talk about what they had learnt. They seemed very clear about all of the areas the training covered. They were able to clearly explain what exercises they had done and what they were about. They described in detail the three approaches about how to be and how not to be a PB as follows:

- Passive - not to respond or listen well
- Aggressive - to push a child to talk to you when they are not ready
- Assertive - ‘the right one’ to think about how you talk to someone and not be put off if the child feels shy or unsure about speaking.

The following quotes highlight the learning in school X

“I used to think about myself more, now I know I need to think about others”

“I’ve learnt to be kinder”

“People can feel different when they are sad”

“I know that if someone gets angry with me that it’s not because of me but because they are just angry”

“I understand about safe and unsafe places”

Children’s readiness to be a PB after the training

In school Y there was a mixed response. Most of the PB’s said they felt ready and yet anxious about their new role. Their readiness came from a sense that the training had been very comprehensive in building their awareness of themselves and others feelings. They felt armed with strategies and tools to attend to potential problems they might encounter. It was also important to remember they were not alone, but working as part of a team.

“I felt really really ready, but a little nervous”

“As soon as I needed what I was trained to do it came back to me”

Others said that the whole application process and the fact that they had come through it gave them the confidence to go out into the playground and feel sure that they would be ok:

“Well, they interviewed us and we filled in the form and did the training, so we must be good enough to be a PB”

The anxieties included

“Would I remember any of it?”

“Have I completely finished am I going to do things right?”

One of the key questions was, “how would everyone know who we are?” It was not clear if there were underlying concerns about why this question was being asked. Was it that some children were concerned that their role would be challenged or not respected?

In school X most of the children expressed nervousness or anxiety at the start of their role as a PB; however they also said that a few things had made the transition from trainee to PB easier. This included the opportunities to practice that were offered throughout their training, the fact that they were easily identifiable by other pupils meant they felt clear in their role. They also talked about the fact that at assemblies there was reference made to the PB scheme. This all made it easier to step into a role that others understood, one they didn't have to explain. It seemed as though the whole school was behind them. All the children said that the nervousness died down after they realised that the skills they had been taught, the awareness of their own and others feelings and having very concrete ideas about how to approach and often to solve, different problems was very empowering. Their fears about problems being too hard to solve were eased.

The Best and Worst Aspects of being a PB

In school Y there was concern about ‘fakers’ at the start of the scheme. “It was really hard to know who was faking at first”. Many of the PB's talked about using their helping hand to resolve and make sense of other children faking needing their support. The helping hand made this period of transition more bearable.

The PB's said they had changed how they were in the playground since becoming a PB. Other pupils no longer in the PB role said they still used their skills in the school and others noted that their friends also took a buddy role at times when they thought others needed this.

“I used to sit down with nothing to do; now I do lots of things”

“I like to help and I care about more people and play with more people now”

In school X the following quotes highlight the best:

“I enjoy playtime now, you're not alone with your problems”

“I think I am making friends”

“I like understanding problems”

“I like learning new things”

“I like it because there are other people with you in the playground”

and the worst:

“Getting angry, I don’t like it when others get angry with me”

“If someone doesn’t want you to help”

“Infants take things too seriously; they don’t know what to get upset about”

“It’s hard to sort something out and then go on to someone else”

Support of Playground Buddies

In School Y many of the buddies talked about how they supported one another or sought the support of a teacher:

“If a case can’t be solved I would go to another PB or go to a teacher”

At this school there were not regular meetings and it seemed that the Buddies would have liked a forum for sharing ideas or problems but also to strengthen the sense of being part of a team. Quite a few of the PB’s said they thought it was useful that the school provided a photo of each of the Buddies on a board, so that other pupils could easily identify them. They also said they found it supportive that there was a certificate awarded for buddy of the week that other children vote for which further supports a whole school approach

In school X PB’s said there were some things they had found they needed support around. Some said that “it can be upsetting when people are sad or angry”, so dealing with others feelings could be quite challenging. One PB said that at times with an improving situation in the playground:

“Some children don’t need PB’s anymore, so I can feel left out”

All the PB’s were really clear who they generally felt very supported by, both in the moment, when they were dealing with difficult situations and generally felt there was support which was more of an ongoing nature. They said they felt supported by one another, both by the fact that there were always 3 PB’s in the playground all the time and because each PB looked out for the others. They named other teachers they could approach and also said that teachers would help them if they were dealing with a situation that was more challenging. Some PB’s noted that that their friends had become more aware

of their role as PB's and as a result were able to be supportive to them. Other PB's said that they found that other children, not their friends but aware of their role, had stepped in to assist at times. They also talked about who was on their helping hand and understood that they could approach a member of their family, a teacher or another friend to talk when they needed help. The children were aware that there were regular meetings to discuss rotas, but there seemed to be problems with a lack of clarity about how regularly they happened and it was noted that not every PB knew when these meetings were taking place.

Do schools feel safer?

There was also a general feeling amongst the buddies in all the schools that the playground felt like a safer place since the introduction of the PBP. The Buddies said they thought there were fewer arguments because the PB's were always checking on things.

“Before bullies could hide from the teachers, but now the PB's are watching”.

In school X some felt that interventions could develop into new problems, for example when a PB tries to intervene in a situation, the situation begins to be resolved and then the PB notices another problem, the pupils needing the original intervention become upset that the PB is leaving.

Some PB's thought that working with infants was easier than working with juniors

“Infants know what a PB does and it's easier than with juniors”

Conversely some PB's said they thought that the juniors

“Can cling to you and it's hard to get them off”

In school X they said that they thought that the fact that problems were being dealt with differently made the playground feel safer. Initially the emphasis was on the bully now there has been a shift to identifying places, 'bus stops', a place for children to go to signal they needed help or support. The emphasis seems to have changed with a growing awareness throughout the playground and this has confirmed the sense at some levels that children are all responsible for one another. A growing sense of citizenship and community seems to be developing around the PB system. Other children seem to be watching the PB's and behaving like them. There seems to be a real preventative atmosphere in the playground with other children emulating the PB's.

“If I'm in trouble, I'm not alone”.

“I understand about safe and unsafe places and where I can get help”

“I feel more confident “

“I don’t get upset as much when I’m with other upset people”

The experience of children who were not trained as PBs

Children in school Y who were not trained as PBs shared their experiences before and after the introduction of PBs

“Not that safe, there was a couple of bullies and we couldn’t sort them out. Now it’s really safe, if you have a bully, PB’s can help out”

“A girl was always picking on me, ES (teacher) helped, but there was no one else”

“There was nowhere to sit if you felt lonely; there was not a bus stop before”

“There used to be lots of arguments, they would take my friend away and wouldn’t let me join in, now PB’s sort it out”

Many of the children referred to the PB board where the buddies are identified with a photo of themselves. This seemed help children feel safer, knowing there were pupils looking out for them and that they were easily identifiable.

It was also important to them that

“The teachers still help if we need them if there’s a big problem”

Many in this group talked about the impact on potential bullies. There seemed to be a sense that they would be more visible, more quickly and not be able to evade the gaze of the teachers. This seemed to act as a deterrent.

“They don’t want to get in trouble, before they might think about being a bully, but now I don’t think they do”

“I think it stops other children copying someone who is doing something wrong”.

The children describe how they had been helped by PB

“I hurt myself, a PB took me to the teacher.” In this instance this child was approached by a PB to see if they needed help.

“Every time I’m feeling lonely or feel lonely and sad, a PB comes and plays with me. I used to feel sad and lonely before”

“I see them helping and I know because of the sash who they are”

“I sat at the bus stop and a buddy came and talked to me, so I didn’t feel so bad, I felt better”

The experiences and perspectives of staff in schools

The following quotes highlight the main reasons identified by staff for their schools getting involved in the PBP

“The idea of children working together having a peer group activity that would bring them together around particular values...I am a great believer in children learning strategies to help themselves”

“PB’s would complement other things happening in the school such as the School Council and the Personal Social and Health Education (PSHE) focus”

“The empowerment aspect, conflict resolution possibilities and the sense that there would be an extra pair of eyes in the playground”

“The fact that the PB’s would be visually apparent really appealed ...so that kids would easily know who to go to safe in the knowledge that they would not be rejected, but that they would be supported”

Choosing children to be trained

Different approaches were used to identify the children to be trained. In one of the schools an application form was made available for anyone who was interested. Children from year 2 upwards were invited to apply. They were asked why they wanted to be a PB and they needed the support of another child and an adult. In another school the teacher felt very strongly “that it was important to choose sensible kids in order that they can be role models for the other kids”. Children were chosen who would understand the responsibility of the role, be able to relate to and understand the training and that they would be able to support one another”.

It is clear that both approaches have their pros and cons. In the first school it was felt that the selection process actively involved the children in, for example, the devising of questions and being part of the interview panel. It was felt in this school that this approach increased the children’s sense of ownership.

In the second school it was felt that the selection process was absolutely crucial and that choosing the wrong child would effectively open up the possibility of the whole thing failing. They were clear in this school that the capacity to provide support for PBs would be limited and therefore children needed to be chosen who were more likely to enjoy and flourish in the role. As such some of the criteria used in this school to choose the PBs were

attendance, ability to understand and communicate and children who were experiencing a good degree of stability in their lives.

There was a consensus that trained PBs could have a role in training new buddies.

In one of the schools it was decided to recruit children from each year. On reflection they felt this was a mistake as the younger children quit more quickly than the others. In another school they focused on recruiting children from year 3, 4 and 5 to ensure there were always trained PBs in the school when year 6 moved onto secondary school.

Identifying staff to be trained

It was very evident that PBPs have a greater chance of success in the longer term if at least two; preferably more enthusiastic staff were trained. Preferably that those trained had a role which lent itself to developing the PBP in the school; such as Personal Social and Health Education (PSHE) leads, Lunchtime Supervisors or Inclusion Mentors. It was also evident how important it was for these staff to be willing to work together as a team to implement, support and develop the PBP. In this regard it was also essential that they were supported and encouraged by senior management in the school. In one school the PSHE Lead was frustrated that she had not participated in the training and did not feel she had the skills or full understanding of the PBP to reinforce the training, pre-empt and resolve issues as they arose.

Experience of Playground Buddy Training

All the staff interviewed felt that the information they received before the training was useful and supported what they had understood about the aims of the PBP. They felt that the training was comprehensive and professional.

C said that

“The children were buzzing after the training...they seemed to be very excited by the idea of being playground buddies and this air of excitement seemed to spread around the school at first.” She said that there was a “ripple effect on other kids in the playground who emulated the ‘kinder to others behaviour’ they witnessed.”

B said that throughout the school there was,

“Definitely a sense that there was an extra pair of eyes in the playground. He also said he thought it was a really positive experience for different age groups to play with each other. The sense he got was that for the older kids it was “like going back to the old days, they remembered what it was like to be that age and could also see how they had changed and developed”.

It was common across the schools that children who were chosen to be PB's were more empowered and able to experience carrying a bit more responsibility.

All the staff interviewed saw the potential to create links between the PBP and the other work in the schools around PSHE, social and emotional aspects of learning (SEAL) and the focus around emotional health and wellbeing (EHWB). They clearly felt there was complementarity and the potential to reiterate the same messages at many different levels in the school.

In some of the schools it was evident that since the initial training there had been no formal training. Some staff described how they did not feel equipped to help children work through the issues arising from being a PB by virtue of not having had the training themselves. One of the issues highlighted was that the training pack alone was not sufficient for people to feel confident to train themselves in the basic principles and approach of the PBP. It seems this was in part the need for experiential training with the PBs and that there is scope for enhancing the training programme materials in a way that makes them accessible to others. It seems that there is scope for Safety Net Schools Programme Staff to be involved in capacity development. This could possibly be through the provision of a training the trainers programme which focuses on the development of buddying programmes

B thought that the whole training package could include ongoing support after the initial training for six months. He suggested regular monthly meetings to review how things are going and to help with solution finding to any issues that arise

Interestingly one of the staff emphasised her view that the establishment of a PBP required a more stable environment. This helped to get the programme working in the early days. She thought that in a more volatile environment it could be potentially problematic to support newly trained PB's. She thought it would not be fair on the PBs; that they might get into trouble quite quickly; confidence and the initiative would be in danger of breaking down.

Impact of PBP on buddies and school as a whole

“The current PB's really love being a buddy. They are animated and enthusiastic about their role, Children talk about PB's and issues around safety in other settings such as the school council or with their teachers. It suggests that there is some integration of the ideas and ethos into other areas of school life.”

“The sense of self esteem of the PB's seemed to have grown as a result of their having this role.”

One of the teachers experience was that

“Sometimes children speak more easily to someone at their own level and they liked being able to identify PB’s and that they liked having them around.”

This reflects the experience across the three schools we met with. One staff member noted that children were not taking playground issues and concerns around bullying to the school council and other fora as much since the establishment of the PBP. Certainly her experience was that other teachers informed her that the PBP was a topic of conversation in classroom discussions.

Support for buddies

Albeit that school staff, in the main, felt that once PBs knew what they were doing and understood their limits it was a really efficient system. They all raised the need for effective, ongoing support for the buddies so that their capacity was not overstretched. They also noted that it was important that they had sufficient opportunity to consider, with a lead staff member, any concerns or issues. C raised her concern about breaks for PBs,

“Some PBs are on all the time, they are never really off duty and don’t seem to want to be. They want to wear their cap or sash or whatever...”

Regular meetings off the potential to check to ensure that children had regular planned opportunities to have a break from their role as a PB and have the opportunity to play without the responsibility of being a PB.

C said she was doing what she could, “trying to have a quick meeting once a month and meeting once a term to set rotas.” However she didn’t feel there was sufficient time and attention given to PBs to talk about any problems they were having and to think about creative solutions. In her school the concept of peer support was struggling. She said 3 of the original PB’s were still around and on duty, but in May, this would not be the case as these children would have moved on. This is a concern as these originally trained PB’s provide a foundation of sorts for the other children and perhaps for the staff too. B said that he had a brief fortnightly review, but he didn’t think the children were admitting to problems. He thought they were instead expressing their concerns by missing their times on duty as a PB. B was concerned that being a PB was quite a responsibility, it takes up a lot of play time and the children need a break. He was aware that more PB’s needed to be trained up so PBs could have more regular breaks from their responsibilities.

C felt there was scope to celebrate the PBs to ensure they feel as valued as possible.

It was evident from the discussions with school staff that there is an issue about consistent, regular support offered being offered to PBs. Clearly where this is not the case it can leave PBs, especially those who take their role very seriously, feeling isolated and possibly overwhelmed by their responsibilities. More need to be done to prevent the potential overspill of problematic

dynamics between pupils as a result of pressure and stress not being identified and addressed in PB support sessions. Potentially the impact of the leaving issues smouldering and a lack of support for PB's could have a negative impact on their self esteem. It confirms the need to have robust support arrangements in place. It needs to be clearly highlighted that successful buddying programme are dependent upon their being consistent and regular support for the PBs

Sustainability of the PBP and ongoing support from Safety Net

C wonders about the PB's who have fallen by the wayside. She doesn't know exactly why this might have happened and doesn't really have the time to find out. She suspects that there are challenges and pressures for the PB's but again hasn't had the time to find out what pressures they might be feeling under.

It seems like the lack of time and focus to the PB's is manifested in a blurring of the use of the Buddy Bus Stop.

“People just sit there now, not just if they need support or help because there is no guarantee that a PB will approach them”

This has led C to wonder if the PBP is losing its identity. She hasn't been able to establish why this might be.

“The 'good' kids tend to be the ones that volunteer for the role, the ones that would be doing this sort of thing anyway, the ones who have good self esteem and confidence. It would be good to have the time to think about including other children, the ones that don't see themselves in this way”. It raises the question about whether there is a danger that a hierarchy could be created if the opportunity to be a PB is only given to the 'usual suspects'

The lack of support from the school means that S doesn't feel motivated or sure about what she's doing around her role with PB's. She feels demoralised and feels it's a wasted opportunity because she did a lot of research for the project.

Keeping families informed

B also said that the school wanted to keep parents involved and informed and wrote to the ones whose children had been identified. None of the parents had any problems with the idea of their children taking on this role. He also said he had good feedback from the parents about their children having been chosen, both from the kids and from them directly

Other Agencies

An officer from the Anti Bullying Alliance who was an advisor to Brighton and Hove Council when the PBP was being set up said

“Safety Net Schools Programme were early adopters of buddying programmes when the whole focus around buddying was starting to gain credence. They managed to do capacity building

within schools to encourage and support the development of a whole school focus.”

He also noted the emphasis that the Schools Programme staff gave to the development of partnership working with staff and this was built on their realistic understanding of what schools could manage.

Recommendations

Linking PBP with other work in schools

Clearly PBP fits specifically with a range of other work ongoing in schools and informed by the National Curriculum such as the focus on emotional health and wellbeing and how this links with the Personal Social and Health Education (PSHE), Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) and Healthy Schools agendas as well as The Children and Young People's Plan. There is scope to embed PBP in schools by making clear, explicit links with these policies and agendas.

Clearly a joined up approach is ever more crucial and fits with the Staying Safe Action Plan and Every Child Matters. The Schools Programme need to be strategic and pragmatic about where and how it locates itself in view of these policies.

In terms of rolling out the PBP some staff shared their view that a more stable environment helped get PB's rooted in the early days. They thought that a volatile environment could be potentially problematic for newly trained PB's, that they could lose confidence and the PBP could be in danger of breaking down. There could be more discussion about the environment in which the PB training take place in and what schools might be appropriate for the training and needs to be in place for schools to support both children and staff. Perhaps Safety Net could help by developing links between schools that have developed PBPs which could help in the process of developing more stability and prepare the ground for PB training. Clearly essential to ensure, as far as is possible, that the PBP and the PBs are not set up to have their confidence knocked out of them or for the programme to fail.

There is scope for enhancing the children's voice in the future promotion of the PBP. To this end Safety Net could consider the approach being developed by organisations such as All Sorts and IMPACT to ensure that the voices of the service users are central to the delivery and development of the service.

Potentially discussions with other agencies such as All Sorts and Mosaic and sharing experiences of provision for children from minority communities may provide ideas and pointers for the future development of the PBP.

Support for Buddies after the training

Clearly the whole premise of PBP is about support for all in schools and at the same time one of the dangers of the PBP for children is the potential lack of adequate and good quality support. Without this children could end up not being clear about what to do with some of the huge responsibility that goes with being a PB and the difficult feelings the role could potentially bring up for them. It is clear from all the school staff interviewed that they have some concerns about the level of consistent support provided for the PBs. For example B's perception was that children were missing their duty was a sign of something not being right. Yet he acknowledged that because of lack of time and/or lack of confidence this is not being attended to

There is scope for making more explicit the expertise that the Safety Net staff have is not just delivering the training but in sharing and embedding their holistic understanding of the support that needs to be made available to PBs. This includes clarifying from the outset of the programme the required levels of regular and consistent support that needs to be offered to buddies throughout the school year. In developing their relationship with schools there is scope to ensure that the school has set up robust support for the PBs which is continually reviewed and developed as required.

Clearly this is also essential to keep the children motivated and enthusiastic about their role as PBs. There will always be issues that could fester and could cause the PBs to become de-motivated. One option that could help maintain enthusiasm is networking and linking schools up with each other to share their experiences and ideas about the development of their PBPs. It was clear from discussions with children that they are interested in and see themselves as part of a 'movement' and they wanted to know what other schools were doing.

Support for Schools after the PB Training

There is scope to identify clearly the ongoing support that Safety Net's Schools Programme can offer to schools once the training has taken place.

Safety Net's Schools Programme could provide joint refresher courses for groups of children and/or staff from different school clusters with a view to supporting the ongoing development of the PBPs in schools

There is potential for Safety Net to make themselves redundant in the schools after the initial training and a period of post training support. This could be facilitated by schools developing their robust understanding of the model. A comprehensive training pack with an overview of the approach and how it links with other work in the schools together with guidelines, exercises and role plays as well as detailed descriptions of the roles and responsibilities of staff and PBs, ways of promoting and championing the PBP and the support that is required specifically for the PBs and indeed all staff and children in the school.

Promotion of the PBP

To further build on the promotion work undertaken to date by The PBP to ensure it is considered by schools across the city

This could include:

- Development of a rolling programme to promote The PBP to all schools and school related agencies and to ensure that all schools and relevant agencies across Brighton and Hove are clear about the aims and approach of the PBP.
- Presentations to and discussions with schools, commissioners and other relevant organisations to highlight the work of The PBP and how it complements the work of other agencies in bullying prevention
- Providing training of trainers for participants who could support the process of rolling out PBPs across Brighton and Hove

- Discussion of anonymous case studies with schools, statutory and voluntary agencies to clarify best ways of developing multi-agency working in schools
- Discuss this report with The Education Authority. Highlight the valuable role that Safety Net's combined Schools, Family Link and Training Programmes can play in supporting schools to effectively support children and staff in their schools
- Consider ways to embed Safety Net in schools. Seek discussions with schools and their commissioners with a view to schools commissioning whole packages from Safety Net.

Signposting and Networking with other agencies

- There is scope for Safety Net to interpret in detail the Staying Safe Action Plan and offer commissioners a coherent package of services using the range of skills and experience in Safety Net. This needs to identify clearly what needs they are meeting, locate their services strategically in the bigger picture for schools and highlight how Safety Net's services are cost effective.
- That the Schools Programme as part of Safety Net continues to operate as an independent voluntary sector organisation with the space to develop an approach which responds to the felt needs of children, families and schools.
- The Schools Programme continues to proactively develop links with other service providers.
- To continually develop systems and procedures for proactive information sharing and coordination with other services to ensure The Schools Programme complements and supplements other services and that the potential for duplication is reduced
- Could more be done to make relationships with black and minority ethnic communities, parents of disabled children or parents who are disabled themselves, lesbian and gay communities in the area that Family Link operates

Schools Programme Capacity

- Clearly there are many positives in the Schools Programme focusing across Brighton and Hove in terms of reaching out to a significant proportion of schools in the city. The expectation is that the lead staff member in the school will initiate further training of buddies and the continual roll out of the programme across the school years. It seems clear that schools do require varying degrees of ongoing encouragement, support and back up to ensure the programme remains central to the ethos of the school. This raises some issues about capacity and the ability of Safety Net's Schools Programme to consistently support all the schools in the ongoing championing and development of playground buddying programmes across the XX schools that have developed playground buddy schemes to date.

Future Development

- Where the playground buddying programme didn't work it would be important to collect information and evaluate at the time to capture

what didn't work and if there are any lessons for the Schools Programme

- Explore the potential for Safety Net to provide a joint package to schools which incorporates its Playground Buddying Programme, Family Link and Training to support schools in supporting their children, families and staff.
- Potential to establish a peer training programme package where staff and children in schools could deliver playground buddy training to other schools in the area.