

## Education and Lifelong Learning

# Evaluation of Campus Police Officers in Scottish Schools

Carolyn Black, Amy Homes, Mark Diffley, Kate Sewel & Vickie Chamberlain

Ipsos MORI were commissioned by the Scottish Government to conduct an independent national evaluation of campus officers<sup>1</sup> in Scotland. The research used a mixed method case study approach to explore the roles that officers play in Scottish schools and provide evidence on the impact and effectiveness of their placements. A best practice guide was created to help local decision makers through the process of deployment and the practicalities of placing an officer in a school. This document summarises the findings of the evaluation.

## Main Findings

- The message from those participating in the research was largely positive. The role that campus officers played in schools was valued by educational staff, pupils and stakeholders alike.
- 3 main factors were considered when selecting schools in which to deploy campus officers: police intelligence relating to the school community, size of the school roll and the availability of funding.
- Most educational staff, campus officers and stakeholders believed that the main purpose of a campus officer was to improve relationships between young people and the police. It was widely believed that the regular interaction, and the forging of positive relationships between campus officers and pupils, had achieved this goal. However, amongst some pupils, it was apparent that positive feelings towards the campus officer did not extend to police personnel in the wider area.
- Campus officers were found to perform broadly similar roles across Scottish schools. Group work (targeted at challenging children and children at risk<sup>2</sup>) and information sharing with educational staff and other agency workers (for example, social workers, restorative practice workers) were considered particularly important elements of the campus officer role.
- Educational staff and campus officers held a common view that the presence of an officer helped to increase the feeling of safety for pupils and/or staff and reduced serious indiscipline, physical violence, gang and criminal activity. This view was supported by some of the findings from the analysis of crime statistics. However, this pattern only emerged in two of the case study schools, and it is not possible to attribute any decrease directly to the role of campus officer.
- Where campus officers were shared between schools it was evident that, in comparison with the full time campus officers, time constraints diluted the role.
- In most cases, the only regularly reported annual cost of placing an officer in a school was the salary of the officer. Annually, it cost a little over £2 million (in salary costs) to have 55 officers in 65 secondary schools. Campus officers were deployed based on an allocation of resources from existing police and local authority budgets.

<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this report, campus officers are defined as police officers who are located within secondary schools and work within these schools and the local community.

<sup>2</sup> **Challenging children** were defined as those who have exhibited challenging behaviour including any form of behaviour that may be harmful to the child, other children or adults. **Children at risk** were defined as those children where their family background or home situation may cause them physical or emotional harm.

## Background

Campus officers are one approach that education and police services are using to help young people engage in positive behaviour and steer vulnerable young people away from antisocial behaviour and crime. The research found a total of 55<sup>3</sup> campus officers in 65 secondary schools, across 6 police forces and 15 local authority areas.

## Methods

A mixed method case study approach was adopted. During the mapping stage, telephone interviews were conducted with 46 campus officers, 52 headteachers and 24 other members of staff who worked closely with the campus officer(s). This information was used in selecting 11 case study schools visited by the research team. During the visits, the officers were observed in situ and interviews were conducted at each school with deputes, multi-agency workers, pupils, campus officers and their line managers. A number of interviews were also conducted with parents and other members of the community. A range of stakeholder interviews were conducted to explore attitudes towards the role and to collect funding and cost information.

National school statistics, crime data and data from the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration were collected to support the qualitative data. Eleven comparison schools were selected (where campus officers were not operational) to enable comparison of data trends pre and post the deployment date of a campus officer<sup>4</sup>. Telephone interviews were conducted with headteachers at each comparison school.

The following success criteria were developed using the research findings to evaluate the *potential* impact and effectiveness of campus officers. The research suggests that a campus officer can be regarded as successful if s/he:

1. improved the pupils' relationship with the police
2. acted as a positive role model to pupils
3. improved information sharing between the police and education staff
4. reduced the following types of behaviour in school and/or in the local community:
  - a. bullying
  - b. serious indiscipline
  - c. physical violence
  - d. gang activity

<sup>3</sup> Details correct as of summer 2009

<sup>4</sup> In some cases, it was not possible to collect full data trends from before and after the campus officer took up post.

5. increased the feeling of safety at school for pupils and/or staff
6. improved the way complaints (made by the local community) are handled by the school.

It was assumed that the better a campus officer's performance on each of these criteria, the more successful the role of the campus officer in relation to the school, the wider community and/or improving the lives of challenging children and/or children at risk.

## The deployment of campus officers

There were no standard, national criteria for deploying campus officers and deployment decisions were typically police-led, with decisions made at a divisional level.

Three main factors were considered when selecting where to deploy campus officers. These centred on police intelligence that related to the school community, the size of the school roll and the availability of funding.

There was a view amongst most educational staff, campus officers and stakeholders that the main purpose of a campus officer was to improve relationships between young people and the police.

Job descriptions were rarely used operationally and where they were used they did not always reflect an officer's day-to-day activities. This gap sometimes led to confusion over the officer's role.

Involvement of education staff in the recruitment of campus officers varied. A number of officers had been appointed after being selected by a senior officer. This was the case for some of the campus officers who had been in post the longest. It was also the case in some schools where deployment had followed on from a pilot project. This was usually due to insufficient time to conduct a more rigorous and formal selection process. In the latter cases, some educational staff and campus officers were concerned that nominated officers had not always been suited or were less motivated about the post.

Successful deployment of a campus officer was dependant on good communication between the relevant agencies (usually the police, the local authority and the school) and on getting the right person for the post.

The provision of training for campus officers was limited and inconsistent, though the picture has improved more recently.

Campus officers were at schools for varying lengths of time. The key considerations in deciding the length of tenure were

the availability of funding and perceptions of impact by key education and police personnel. Three years was suggested as an appropriate period to build up a relationship with pupils, parents, educational staff and the wider community.

A number of educational staff, parents and pupils expressed initial negativity about having a campus officer in their school. This negativity commonly centred around 3 key concerns: that the officers would become involved in enforcing school discipline; that the initiative was a subtle strategy for gathering local police intelligence; and that having a police officer would reflect badly on the reputation of the school. However, initial concerns largely disappeared once the campus officer(s) had been in post for a short period.

## The role of campus officers

Campus officers' roles were broadly similar across all schools. However, elements varied according to the needs of each school.

Group work (targeted at challenging children and children at risk) was considered particularly important. The activity itself was not as important as the opportunity it gave pupils to receive the kind of attention that may have been lacking in other aspects of their lives. Information sharing with educational staff and other agency workers was also viewed as an integral part of the campus officer role.

The findings from the mapping exercise indicated that almost all campus officers delivered, or were involved in organising, input to the curriculum for pupils in their schools.

Campus officers' work with feeder primary school pupils was typically seen by participants as an extremely important part of their role. In practice, however, officers did not always spend the amount of time they would have liked in primary schools due to time constraints and the dispersed locations of the schools.

Campus officers were not usually involved in dealing with indiscipline unless it involved potentially criminal behaviour.

## The impact and effectiveness of campus officers

Overwhelmingly the message from those participating in the research was positive. The role that campus officers played in schools was valued by educational staff, pupils and stakeholders alike.

Most educational staff and campus officers felt that having a police officer regularly interacting with pupils had improved relationships between the police and pupils. Amongst some

pupils however, it was apparent that positive feelings towards the individual campus officer did not extend to police personnel in the wider area. It is possible that the effects of this work on pupil/police relationships may take more time to emerge.

The improved information sharing between the police and school (primarily information held by the police) was deemed by police and educational staff to be one of the main benefits of the role. They felt it improved the welfare of pupils at the school, meant the school was better equipped to provide pupils with support and helped prevent offending behaviour.

Educational staff and campus officers held a common view that the presence of a campus officer could help to reduce serious indiscipline, physical violence, gang and criminal activity in case study schools. They felt this was due to the officer(s) forging positive relationships with pupils, conducting targeted work with challenging children and children at risk and increased levels of information sharing between the school and the police (which helped stop incidents in the local community spilling into the school environment). This view was supported by crime data trends in two case study schools. However, it is not possible to attribute any decrease *directly* to the role of campus officer.

A common view held by educational staff, campus officers and pupils was that having a campus officer in school increased the feeling of safety for pupils and/or staff. It was clear that some educational staff were reassured by the campus officer(s) presence when dealing with incidents of physical violence.

In several cases, the campus officer was shared between more than one school. Although the work of the officer(s) was viewed favourably by educational staff, it was evident that time constraints diluted the role which was likely to reduce their performance on all of the success criteria.

In some schools the campus officer accompanied the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) on home visits to speak to parents of truanting pupils. However, there was no clear evidence that in schools where the campus officer accompanied the EWO on home visits, that this had an effect on the attendance rate.

Educational staff in a few case study schools commented on the positive effect campus officers had on dealing with complaints made by the public. Some local residents also welcomed campus officer involvement as it gave them a consistent figure to deal with persistent problems, which they previously felt were not a priority for the school. Comparison school interviews however, indicated that this role could be completed by other staff instead of a campus officer.

## The cost of deploying officers in schools and funding

In most cases, the only regular reported annual cost in placing an officer in a school was the salary of the officer. The average total salary cost of placing an officer in a school was £38,161. There were also ongoing costs (such as diversionary activities and travel) and set up costs (including IT and marketing) that are likely to increase the overall level of expenditure.

Annually, it cost a little over £2 million (in salary costs) to have 55 officers in 65 schools across Scotland. Campus officers were deployed based on an allocation of resources from existing police and local authority budgets. Approximately 64% were funded by the police, 30% by local authorities and 6% by Community Planning Partnerships, from the Fairer Scotland Fund.

The research originally aimed to provide an assessment of the cost-effectiveness of campus officer(s). However there were difficulties with quantifying cost savings due to a lack of data which meant it was not possible to conduct this assessment.

## Conclusions

In conclusion, campus officers are likely to have the largest effect on each of the success criteria if they are deployed in schools where:

- perceptions of the police are especially negative
- pupils are likely to have a lack of positive role models in the community
- there are higher numbers of children exhibiting challenging behaviour or at risk
- issues from the local community sometimes spill over into the school community
- the school is situated in an area with gang activity.

It is important to highlight that particularly positive findings emerged in two of the case study schools. In these schools there was a reduction in the number of crimes recorded and the cases of exclusion. Both of these schools also performed particularly well on each of the success criteria. Although these outcomes cannot be directly attributed to the campus officer, triangulation of these findings with performance on the success criteria provides important indicators for best practice.

The report highlights a series of recommendations reflecting good practice to help local decision makers through the process of deployment and the practicalities of placing an officer in a school.

If you require further information of this research findings or have any enquires about social research please contact:

Dissemination Officer  
The Scottish Government  
Education Analytical Services  
1 B South, Victoria Quay  
Edinburgh EH6 6QQ

This document, along with full research report of the project, and further information about social and policy research commissioned and published on behalf of the Scottish Government, can be viewed on the Internet at: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/socialresearch>. If you have any further queries about social research, or would like further copies of this research findings summary document or the full research report, please contact us at [socialresearch@scotland.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:socialresearch@scotland.gsi.gov.uk) or on 0131-244 7560.

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