

EVALUATION OF THE SOS+ INTERVENTION

SOS Project, St Giles Trust

Billie Hopkins
Junior Smart
Joanne Lackenby

Contents

Executive summary	2
1. Introduction	3
2. Method	3
3. Results	3
3.1 <i>Weapons</i>	4
3.2 <i>Questionnaire Responses from the Children</i>	4
Benefits	
3.2.1 <i>Increased Knowledge</i>	4
3.2.2 <i>Staying Safe</i>	5
3.2.3 <i>Realistic Delivery of Intervention</i>	5
3.2.4 <i>Interactions</i>	5
Suggestions from participants	
3.2.5 <i>Sessions content</i>	5
3.2.6 <i>Length of session</i>	6
3.2.7 <i>Emotions</i>	6
3.2.8 <i>Improvement to Delivery</i>	6
3.3 <i>Questionnaire Responses from the Teachers/Staff</i>	6
Benefits	
3.3.1 <i>Increased Knowledge</i>	6
3.3.2 <i>Interactions</i>	6
3.3.3 <i>Realistic Delivery of Intervention</i>	6
Suggestions from participants	
3.3.4 <i>Sessions Content</i>	7
3.3.5 <i>Improvement to Delivery</i>	7
4. Discussion/Future research	7
References	9
Appendices	1-9

Executive summary

This report is a preliminary evaluation of the SOS+ project within St Giles Trust, which is a service available for young vulnerable people within some London Boroughs who are at risk of becoming involved in gangs.

The main aim of SOS+ is to act as a prevention intervention for those young people at risk by providing knowledge and dispelling myths about gangs.

SOS+ focuses on the dangers of carrying and using weapons, along with changing people's perceptions of gangs and the lifestyle associated with them. The overall goal of SOS+ is to keep young people safe and out of gangs.

To evaluate this intervention, questionnaires were given to the young people who were involved in SOS+ regarding their experience and opinion of the session they participated in. These results showed that overall a large majority of the 735 sample (52%) stated that their view of gangs had changed as a result of the intervention - rating the SOS+ project as 10 out of 10.

The findings also revealed that half of the young people have some knowledge or understanding of crime-related behaviour. When exploring this further, 20% admitted to having previously carried a knife and 44% suggested that they knew someone who did carry a knife.

This indicated that SOS+ interventions are needed as it is clear that a significant number of the young people could be at risk of becoming involved in gangs.

The questionnaires also showed what the young people enjoyed about the sessions. This included; increased knowledge, information on how to stay safe, and the realistic delivery of the session and how it was interactive.

When stating what they would change about the session, they suggested; session length, session content, the emotions involved. When the young people were asked about improvements to future sessions a majority stated "nothing", however suggested improvements were more interactions and more time for a discussion. Suggestions for future sessions of SOS+ are discussed.



1. Introduction

The SOS+ Project is a service available for young vulnerable people who are at risk of becoming involved in gangs. The aim of SOS+ is to act as a prevention intervention for those young people at risk. This work is conducted by staff who are ex-offenders within schools across the country. These staff members teach young people about the dangers of gang lifestyles. The intervention focuses on the dangers of carrying and using weapons as well as changing peoples' perception of the gang lifestyle by raising awareness. The purpose of the intervention is to provide young people with knowledge about gang life and to dispel myths. The overall goal is to keep young people safe and out of gangs and this is delivered through schools across the country.

2. Method

To evaluate the success of the SOS+ project as an intervention, the SOS project administered course evaluation questionnaires in the London schools. The questionnaire examined; whether views of participants had changed and in what way, whether participants had ever carried a knife or knew someone who has, whether they knew anyone who had been stabbed or if they knew anyone who had been threatened with a knife. The questionnaire also examined how the young people rated the SOS+ project intervention and what they liked, disliked and what they would change. The questionnaires evaluation and interpretation was completed by Coventry University.

3. Results

The SOS+ intervention programme has delivered around 400 sessions, the session size ranged from 4 to 250 people. In total, 735 post-evaluation questionnaires were returned, 327 from males and 287 from females. The remaining 123 did not identify their gender (refer to figure 1 and appendix 1 for more demographic information).

Figure 1. Percentage of school years involved in SOS+

Age of participants	Percentage of sample
8-9	0.3%
9-10	10%
10-11	16%
11-12	2%
12-13	27%
13-14	3%
14-15	8%
15-16	8%
18	0.5%
21	0.1%
Staff	1%
Teacher	0.1%

A review of the responses indicated that 52% (refer to figure 2 and appendix 2) of the children reported that their view had changed regarding gangs after taking part in the SOS+ intervention.

Figure 2 also reveals that nearly half of all the young people have some knowledge or understanding of crime-related behaviour e.g. knowing someone who carries a knife, knowing someone who has been threatened or stabbed.

This could indicate that SOS+ interventions are needed as it is clear that a significant number of the young people could be at risk of becoming involved in gangs.

I just wanted to extend not only my personal thanks, but the thanks & gratitude of my team and the Partnership for your continuing hard work and commitment.”

D. Coxell, Newham Constabulary

The Office of National Statistics (2015) has shown how knife crimes have increased within years. This gives more reasons for interventions like SOS+ to be in place to help young people who are at risk of gang related crimes. Harris, Turner, Garrett and Atkinson (2011) have also suggested that there is evidence to link this rise to gang related behaviour in London.

3.1 Weapon use

The responses indicated that 20% of the children admitted to having previously carried a knife. 44% of the responses suggested that they knew someone who did carry a knife. When exploring these figures in more depth it was found that a majority of the children who admitted to ever carrying a knife aged 12-16, while a majority of 12-13 year olds said they have not ever carried a knife (refer to appendix 3). Overall from these tables, it is noticeable that a younger age group reported they have never carried a knife; whereas, the middle to higher ages stated that they have at some point have carried a knife. This could be due to younger children not having experienced such behaviours or that they are worried about getting into trouble from telling the truth so they are displaying social desirability. Social desirability simply means when someone answers a question that makes them seem favourable to others (Lusk, 2011). This could also be due to older teenagers being introduced into this environment more commonly than younger children. However, when exploring whether the children knew anyone who has ever carried a knife (refer to appendix 4), this showed there was little difference in reporting across the age groups. Although, ages 12-13 did report marginally higher levels of knowing someone else who has carried a knife but this was also the case when stating when they did not know anyone who had carried a knife.

Social desirability or a response bias may be a relevant consideration in respect of these figures. The children who responded may have been less likely to admit themselves that they have carried a knife due to fears of being identified, negative consequences or punishment or being scared to admit their involvement. Respondents may have felt comfortable admitting that they knew someone who had carried a knife and this could explain why the numbers in figure 2 are higher in the

question when asked if they know someone else who carries a knife.

The questions also explored how the young people rated the SOS+ project. This showed that 46% of the sample gave the project a 10 out of 10 rating (refer to figure 3 and appendix 5). This suggests that the participants found the programme enjoyable and useful. The ratings were from 0 to 10 which 10 being defined as excellent, 8 good, 5 average, 2 poor.

3.2 Questionnaire Responses of the children

Content analysis was used for the qualitative responses to the questionnaire. This involves a 7 step method. These steps are as following; framing a research question (evaluation of SOS+ intervention), selecting the sample (young people involved in SOS+), defining themes, outlining a coding process, applying the coding process, determining trustworthiness of this process, and analysing the codes (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005). The main aim of this method is to make a large amount of text into smaller themes. The type of content analysis which was used for this research was conventional content analysis, this means the coding themes were directly gathered from the data and were not created before the data was explored (Mayring, 2014).

The content analysis showed themes across the three questions of what they enjoyed, disliked and what they would improve or change (see appendix 6 and 7).

Figure 2. Percentages of questionnaire questions

Rating	Percentage
1	0.3%
4	0.7%
5	2%
6	2%
7	9%
8	13%
9	22%
10	46%

Figure 3. Ratings of SOS+ project

	Yes	No	N/A
Changed view	52%	18%	19%
Have you ever carried a knife?	20%	72%	0.4%
Do you know someone who has carried a knife?	44%	40%	0.4%
Do you know anyone who has been stabbed?	47%	30%	0.5%
Do you know someone who has been threatened with a knife?	47%	40%	0.8%

Benefits

3.2.1 Increased Knowledge

A common theme throughout the responses was that the young people felt that they had increased their knowledge on gangs and had come away from the SOS+ intervention having learnt new information. This was concluded due to comments such as, "I got a lot of information about gang life, and the consequences of being in a gang", "not to be

in gang and make bad choices" "taught me a lot in today's lesson". It also showed that the young people also enjoyed "learning about girls involvement" This could be something to include more in the future as nearly half of the sample were females and this may help them protect themselves from getting involved in gangs. The sample also talked about how they enjoyed learning about gangs through another point of view such as the police; an example of this was, "comparing the views of police and gang members".

3.2.2 Staying Safe

The young people also mentioned throughout the data that they learned methods of how to stay safe from gangs. Some of the sample quoted that from the SOS+ session that they were "learning how to stay safe", "how to be safe around gangs", or gaining "advice to stay out of trouble". This suggests the intervention may have been effective in raising awareness of how to stay safe.

3.2.3 Realistic Delivery of Intervention

Throughout the data the young people spoke about how they enjoyed; "the reality and

realistic approach to explanation", and that "it was honest and open and did not conceal anything". They also spoke about how they valued who delivered the intervention; "hearing real experiences", "the way the staff has experience in the subjects", "I enjoyed talking about real life events from the people who have first-hand experience and knowledge". The realistic approach may make the intervention feel more personal to the children and also they may feel like they are able to relate to the facilitators. One young person spoke of how "the way he was talking, it was like he understood us".

This shows the impact the facilitators had on the children and how it made them feel. They also reported that the facilitators were good at engaging and gave the impression they were easy to communicate to; this is due to such statements as; "the reality, the down to earth nature of the presenters, presenting serious information in a gripping way".

3.2.4 Interactions

Frequently, the young people also mentioned how they liked the interaction within the SOS+ sessions. They gave feedback regarding what they enjoyed about the sessions; "discussing everyone's experiences", "the line of truth and naming games", "watching the video" "everyone being able to contribute", "role plays, videos, engagement questions" and "how the presenter could engage everyone". This shows that the SOS+ intervention engaged the children and they found it a fun environment which may be significant in reinforcing their learning.

Suggestions from participants

3.2.5 Sessions content

The young people did highlight that there were "not enough questions asked", this could suggest that the young people wanted more interaction time or more time to discuss and ask questions. Many of the young people suggested they did not like the consequences they learned, such as, "hearing how young children are involved in gangs", "finding out that gangs kill people", "hearing about people who have died" and "knowing the stories of people". However, this is not necessarily a criticism of the intervention as this shows how the young people were seeing the negative slide of gangs and learning the real consequences which potentially could impact upon future engagement with gangs.

Another point they highlighted was the “lack of warning about gruesome pictures” and the “graphic pictures” but again these showed the young people the real slide of involvement in gangs. One person quoted “some of the pictures were a bit disturbing but a harsh reality” and again this shows that the intervention was having an impact on the young people as they were learning the consequences and seeing it for themselves.

3.2.6 Length of session

Throughout the feedback, the young people spoke about the length of the session. Some quotes were they did not like “spending 15 mins answering why people joined gangs”, “sitting down for a long time”, “the long speeches” and the “PowerPoint was long”. However, a few spoke of how they disliked that it was “only one session”. Constructive feedback such as this is useful to the SOS+ team in fine tuning the delivery of future sessions.

3.2.7 Emotions

Participants reported that they did not like the images and videos used within the intervention due to feeling shocked or saddened, some of them quoted “hearing the stories made me sad”, “Marlon’s story” as it made them feel unhappy, “felt uncomfortable” when watching the video, for example “the fact the boy got shot it was sad”. It could be that these modes of delivery are useful in presenting individuals at risk of becoming involved in gang activity with a realistic impression of the gang lifestyle and associated problems to help them make a more informed choice. What is notable about these is that they do not relate to the intervention style of delivery but that they were upset and shocked by what they learned. If such feelings helped to deter individuals from this lifestyle, then such factors may indeed indicate a positive outcome; as one young person quoted, “seeing what I do don’t just hurt me but people around me”.

3.2.8 Improvement to Delivery

One element of the questions asked the young people if they would make any changes or improvements to the SOS+ interventions. Some of their responses were; “more time for the discussion” and “more videos”. This showed they enjoyed the interaction and maybe felt like they benefited from these elements more. Other suggestions they made were “more information about what to do if you find yourself threatened or in a gang” and “information on how to exit a gang”. These are

points which could be considered for future sessions.

However, the main quote which emerged again and again was that the young people enjoyed “everything” in the SOS+ intervention and the common quote in what they did not like about the intervention was “nothing”. This is in keeping with the finding that participants liked “everything”. Overall a large majority of the sample stated how their perception on gangs has now changed (52%) and that they enjoyed the SOS+ project. This was evident in the responses as the young people commented about the project having inspired them and given them information that they did not know about in relation to gangs. One person even quoted it was the “one of the best lessons in my life”.

3.3 Questionnaire Responses of the Teachers/Staff

There was 1 teacher and 7 members of staff included in these questionnaire responses. The mean rating for the SOS+ intervention for the staff and teacher was 9, which correlates with the children’s rating as they also gave it a high rating. Their views of the intervention were also very similar to the children. The content analysis showed similar themes which are shown in appendix 8 and 9.

I am truly grateful for your talk... You were able to capture the groups full attention and you gave a real honest insight into some of the ugliest parts of street life.”

S. Tate, Community Engagement Advisor

Enjoyed themes

3.3.1 Increased Knowledge

The teachers and staff responses were similar in the fact that they both suggested how the SOS+ intervention increased their knowledge of gangs. Some of the teachers and staff quoted that it “covered useful topics” and how it was “very factual and the truth”. This shows how the SOS+ intervention is a good educational tool for young people who are risk of being involved in gangs.

3.3.2 Interactions

Again the teachers and staff also commented on how they enjoyed the interaction aspect of the session and that it made it “very engaging”

for the young people. They commented on how they partially liked the “interactive games and discussions”.

3.3.3 Realistic Delivery of Intervention

The teachers and staff also commented on how they enjoyed the “the realism and how relatable it all is”. This is useful to know because if the young people can relate to the facilitators they might take on board the consequences and think about their future behaviour.

“I would wholeheartedly endorse Mona (a caseworker) to any youth group or school.”

PC A. Barr, Elm Court School

Suggestions from participants

3.3.4 Sessions Content

The teachers and staff highlighted that they would have liked “more knowledge on joint enterprise”. This suggests that there is a gap in the knowledge of teachers and possibly children also if teachers are not able to answer their questions or impart knowledge on this topic. Future elements to incorporate could include real-life examples of those prosecuted and follow up materials for schools.

3.3.5 Improvement to Delivery

In the questionnaire where it asked for any improvements or changes the teachers and staff suggested that they would like, “more discussion on how to assert self” and they wanted “more talks..., so that young people are warned” about gang lifestyles.

4. Discussion/Future Research

Overall the evaluation showed positive feedback for the SOS+ intervention, as 52% reported a change in their views about gang lifestyles and a further 46% rated SOS+ as 10 out of 10. However, the evaluation did show how half of the total sample revealed that they had some knowledge or understanding of crime related behaviour. For example participants stated that they either knew someone who carries a knife, or know someone who has been threatened or stabbed.

This demonstrated how the SOS+ intervention is beneficial for this sample. Although, 20%

admitted to ever carrying a knife were largely from an older age group. This could have been due to the younger years not yet being involved in criminal behaviour; therefore this could provide a good time to intervene with the SOS+ to help prevent future criminal behaviour.

The content analysis from the questionnaire responses revealed themes which the young people enjoyed about the SOS+ sessions. These were; increased knowledge, staying safe, realistic approach and interactions. However, it also showed what the younger people disliked about the sessions. This was; session content, length of session and emotions involved.

Themes emerged from the content analysis conducted on the teacher’s response and the staff responses. Again these were increased knowledge, interactions and the realistic approach. The disliked theme teachers identified was the sessions content. This feedback suggests that SOS+ should continue to provide a realistic insight and keep the sessions interactive. However SOS+ could develop the sessions to have more development on the Joint Enterprise and break up the sessions into shorter more interactive chunks.

Future research

The evaluation suggests that future delivery of the intervention would be enhanced by focusing more on the girls’ involvement in gangs as this was a common theme throughout the feedback by the participants.

It could maybe explore SOS+ projects with just young females to cover the specific issues relating to young girls and gang lifestyle. The participants indicated that they would like more than one session. This could suggest that a short programme of courses could be developed focussing on different aspects gang lifestyle.

Further evaluation of the SOS+ project intervention could be enhanced by determining clear outcomes for the intervention with regards to education / information giving, attitude change and behaviour change and developing the evaluation questionnaires to assess these factors. Evaluation of the effectiveness of the SOS+ intervention in reducing the number of young people who get involved in gangs could be evaluated by

following up the same young people subsequent to the intervention to assess the lasting effects on them.



“The young people really enjoyed it and were just buzzing about the session for the rest of the day.”

E. Sethi, Save the Children

References

HARRIS, D., TURNER, R., GARRETT, I. and ATKINSON, S., 2011. Understanding the psychology of gang violence: Implications for designing effective violence interventions. 2011. *Probation Journal*, **58**(3), pp. 272-273.

HSIEH, H. and SHANNON, S.E., 2005. Three approaches to qualitative content analysis. *Qualitative health research*, **15**(9), pp. 1277.

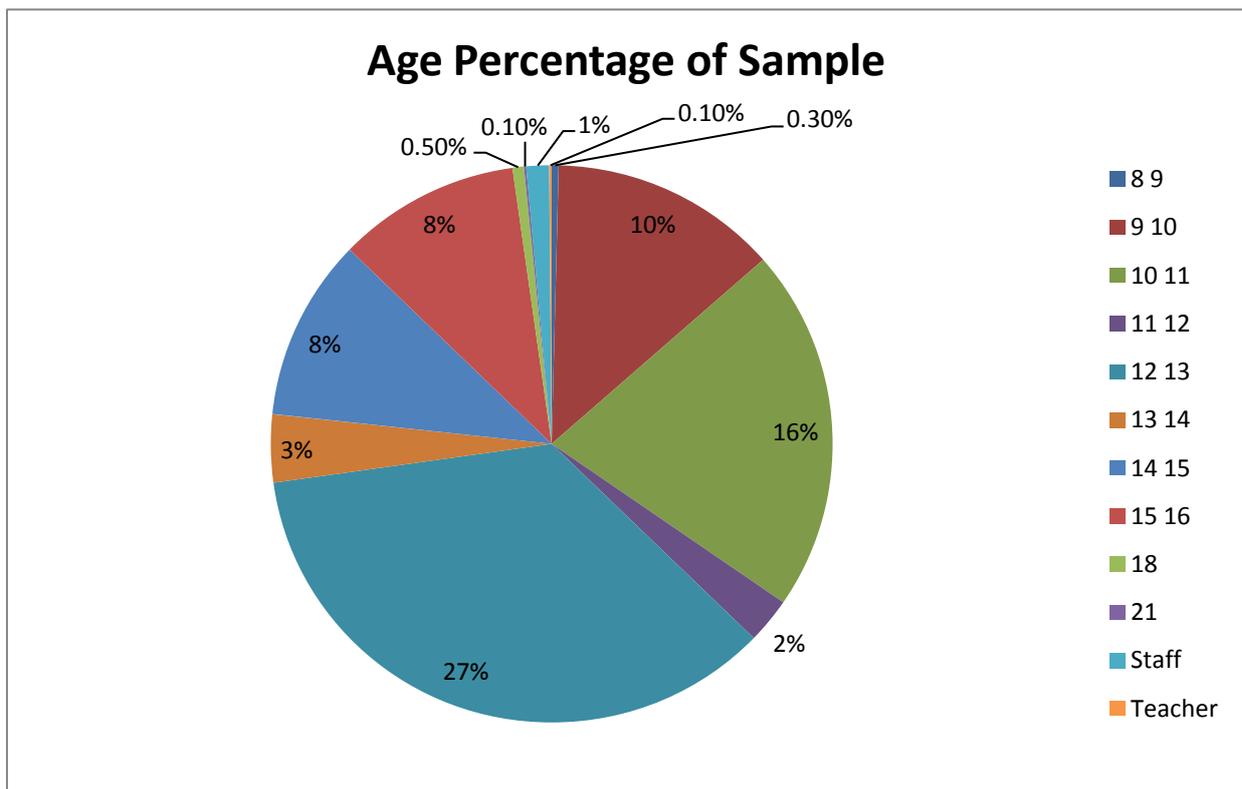
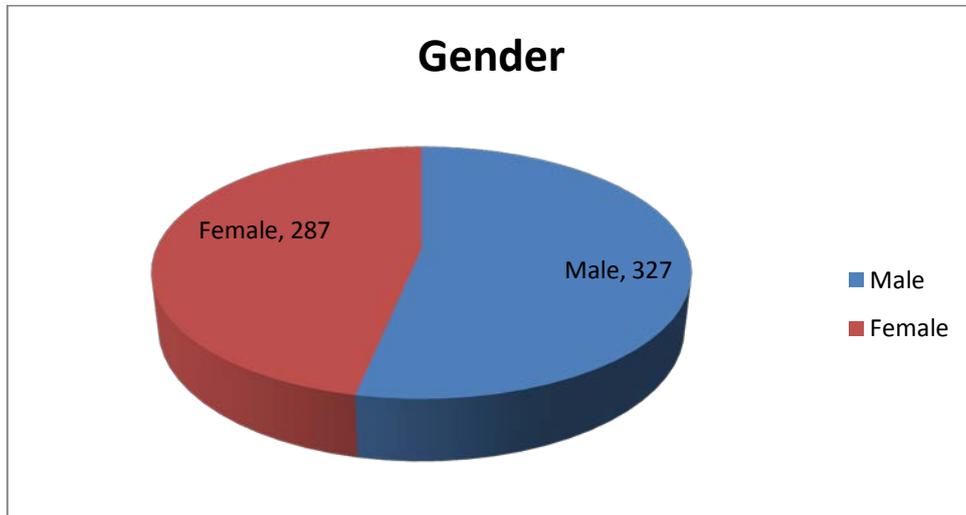
LUSK, J., 2011. Social Desirability Bias in Real, Hypothetical, and Inferred Valuation Experiments. *American Journal of Agricultural Economics*, **93**(2), pp. 528-534.

Mayring, Philipp : *Qualitative content analysis: theoretical foundation, basic procedures and software solution*. Klagenfurt, 2014. URN: <http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoa-395173>

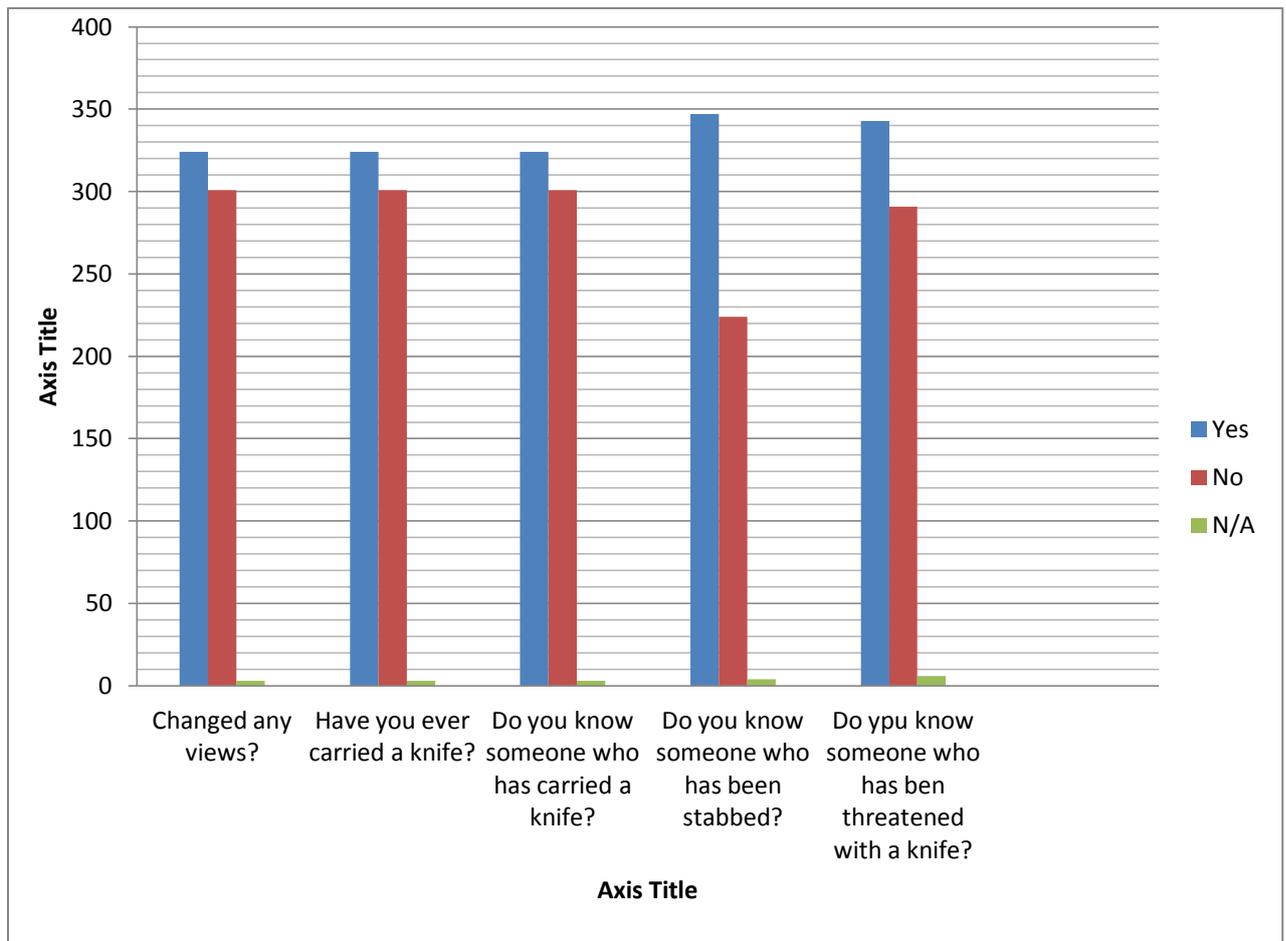
The Office for National Statistics (2015) *Crime Statistics* [online] available from <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/crime-stats/crime-statistics/year-ending-june-2015/index.html> [28 October 2015]

Appendices

Appendix 1. Demographic Information about Participants

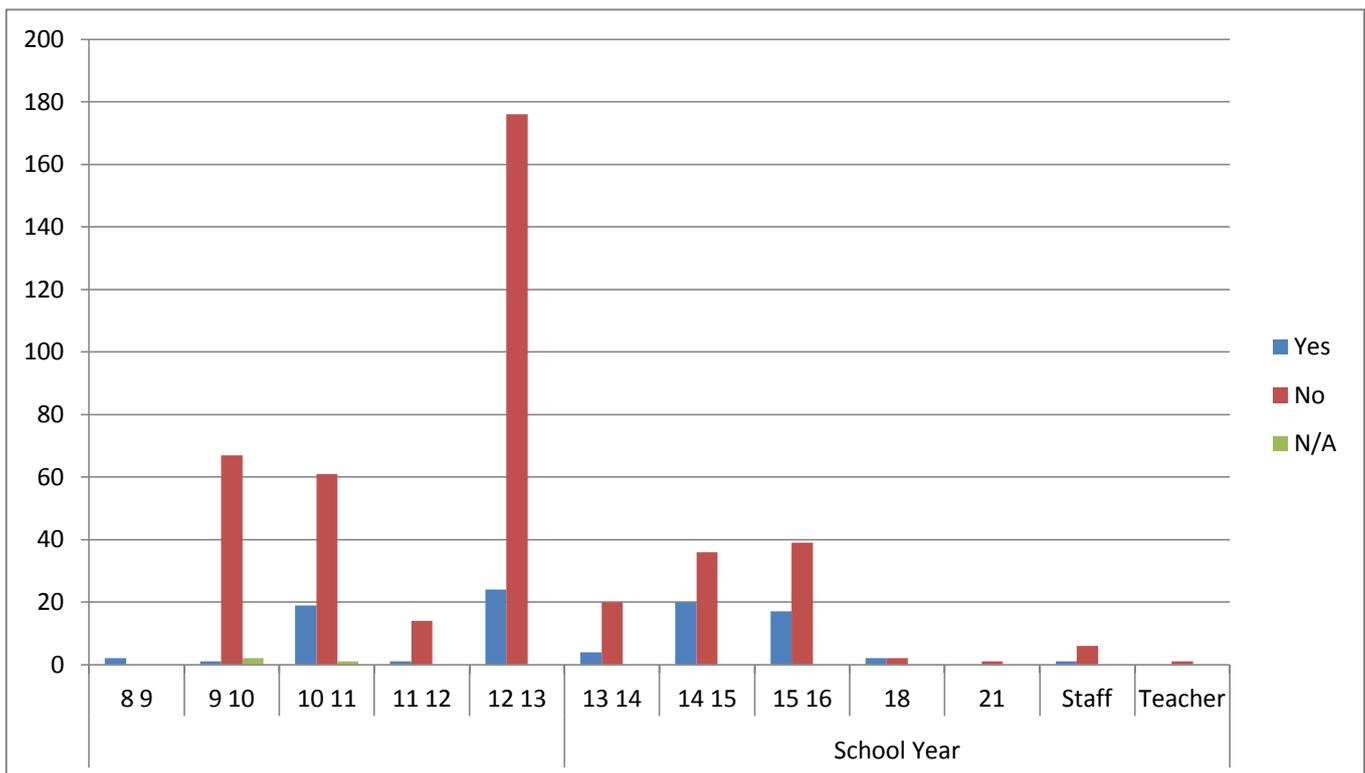


Appendix 2. Histogram showing results of the questionnaires



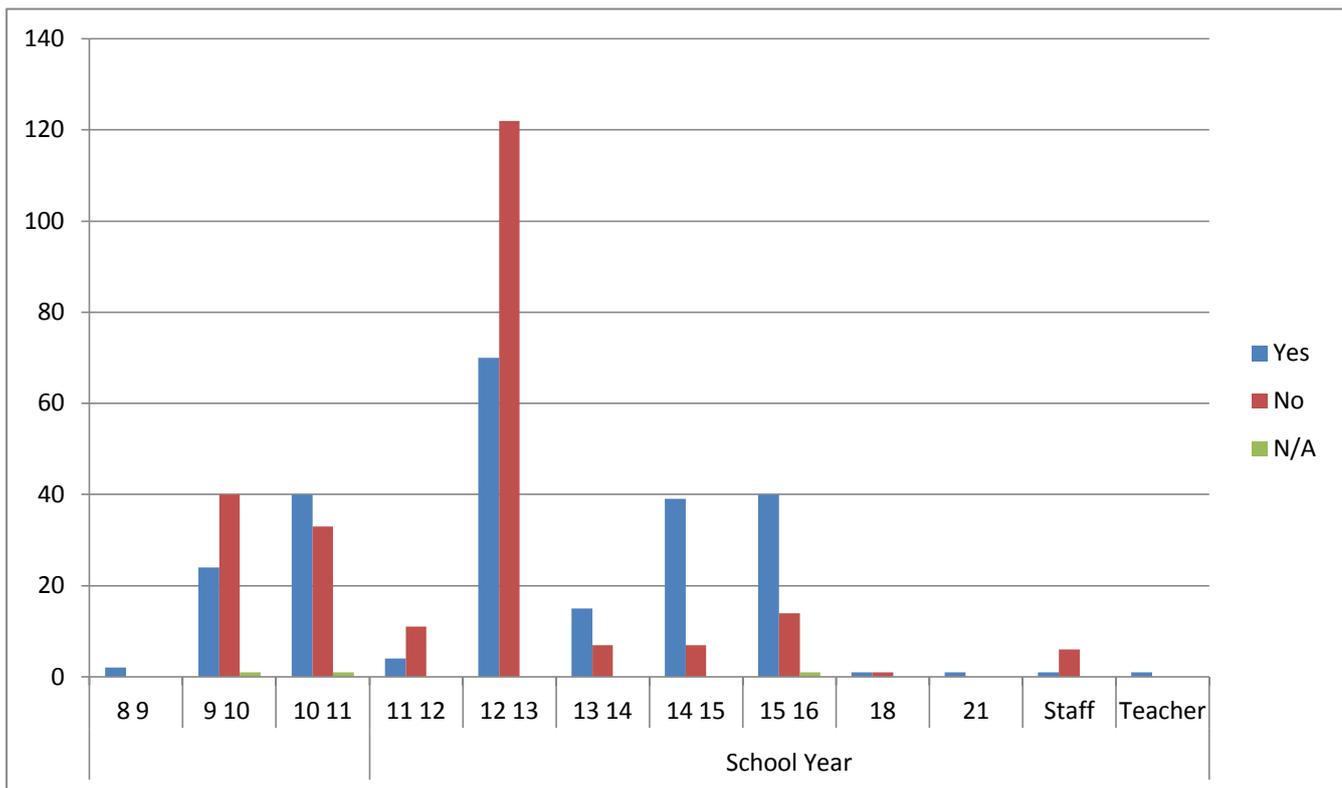
Appendix 3. Age of Participants Who Have Ever Carried a Knife

Carried A Knife	School Year											
	8-9	9-10	10-11	11-12	12-13	13-14	14-15	15-16	18	21	Staff	Teacher
Yes	2	1	19	1	24	4	20	17	2	0	1	0
No	0	67	61	14	176	20	36	39	2	1	6	1
N/A	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

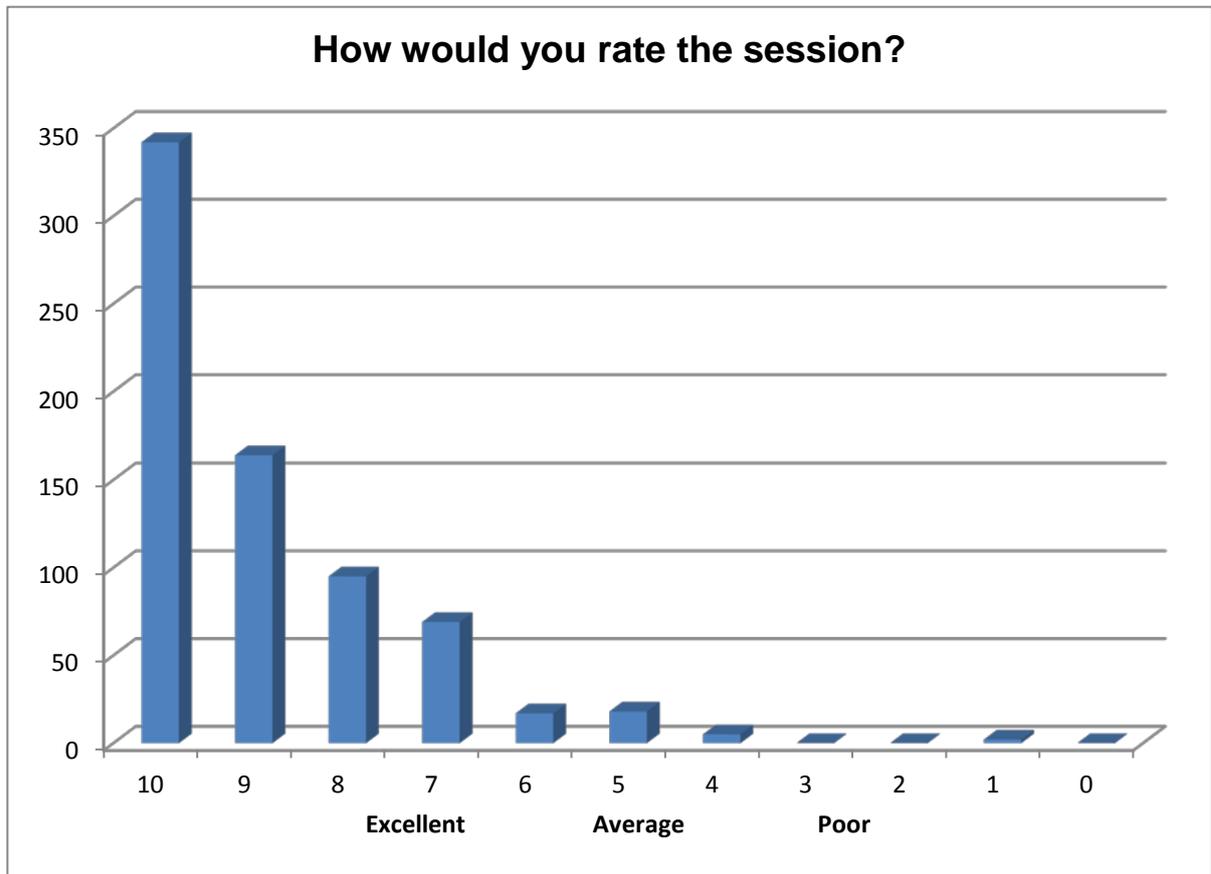


Appendix 4. Age of Participants Who Have Known Someone Else Who Has Ever Carried a Knife

Know Someone Who Carries A Knife	School Year											
	8-9	9-10	10-11	11-12	12-13	13-14	14-15	15-16	18	21	Staff	Teacher
Yes	2	24	40	4	70	15	39	40	1	1	1	1
No	0	40	33	11	122	7	7	14	1	0	6	0
N/A	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0

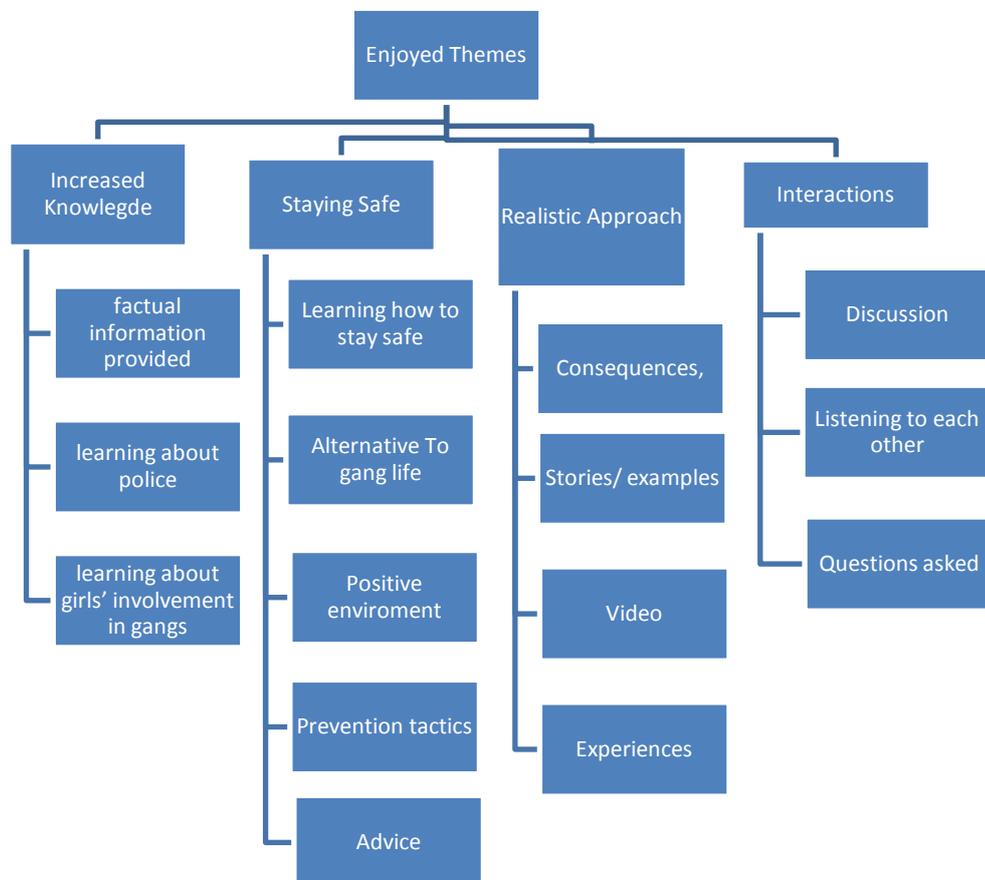


Appendix 5. Rating Scores for SOS+



Appendix 6. Key findings from Young People in the Content Analysis

Enjoyed Themes	Codes
Increased Knowledge	factual information provided, learning about girls' involvement in gangs, learning about police
Staying Safe	learning how to stay safe, alternative to gang life, positive environment, prevention tactics, advice
Realistic Approach	consequences, stories/examples(experiences), video
Interactions	Discussion, listening to each other, questions asked



Appendix 8. Key findings from Teachers and Staff in the Content Analysis

Enjoyed Themes	Codes
Increased Knowledge	up to date examples, very engaging for the young people and covered useful topics, very good knowledge, was very factual and the truth
Interactions	interactive games and discussion, group interaction
Realistic approach	the realism and how relatable it all is
Good standard	honest, clear and considerate, very relevant

