

# Whole-school interventions promoting student commitment to school to prevent substance use and violence, and improve educational attainment: a systematic review

Ruth Ponsford,<sup>1</sup> GJ Melendez-Torres,<sup>2</sup> Alec Miners,<sup>3</sup>  
Jane Falconer<sup>4</sup> and Chris Bonell<sup>1\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Public Health, Environments and Society, London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, London, UK

<sup>2</sup>College of Medicine and Health, University of Exeter, Exeter, UK

<sup>3</sup>Department of Health Services Research and Policy, London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, London, UK

<sup>4</sup>Library & Archives Service, London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, London, UK

\*Corresponding author [chris.bonell@lshtm.ac.uk](mailto:chris.bonell@lshtm.ac.uk)

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## Plain language summary

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## Plain language summary

**W**hole-school health interventions aim to modify how schools are run, to promote students' health. Some aim to promote student commitment to school to prevent the important interlinked outcomes of substance (tobacco, alcohol, other drugs) use and violence. We searched for all evaluations of such interventions. We summarised what this research said about the sorts of interventions used, how they are meant to work, what factors affect delivery, whether or not they reduce violence and substance use and whether or not they are worth the money.

We found 63 reports on 27 studies of 22 interventions.

We identified four subtypes of interventions. These aimed to involve students in school decisions, improve staff–student relationships, increase engagement in learning or involve parents.

Most of these interventions were intended to work by making sure schools focused on student needs, or by improving relationships between staff and students, between different areas of learning or between schools and communities. This aimed to make students feel committed to school and therefore avoid violence or substance use. A few aimed to work mostly by teaching students how to avoid violence and substance use.

We found that interventions were well implemented if they were tailored for each school and had good materials and support. Interventions were well delivered if they were led by action groups (comprising staff, students, etc.) or provided schools with information on students' needs. Implementation was affected by whether or not schools accepted the need for change and whether or not staff had the necessary time and money to do the work.

These interventions appear to have small, but significant, intervention impacts in preventing violence and substance use among young people. There was not consistent evidence of different effects for different students. A small number of studies suggest that such interventions might show economic benefit, but this would need further research.

Future research should focus on interventions that are refined to make sure that they can be well delivered.

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