



# Prioritising Prevention

## Working with schools to prevent violence against women and girls

*'You're not going to stop it, but you need to prevent it as much as you can.'*  
(Young man, Year 10)



## Acknowledgments

We would like to thank Comic Relief for funding this innovative two year project and for their on-going support to the violence against women and girls sector.

We also want to thank the fantastic grassroots expert organisations, Respond, Nottinghamshire Domestic Violence Forum, Victim Support Cornwall, Tender, Off the Record and Southall Black Sisters. Their passion, commitment and enthusiasm has been inspirational and the work they have achieved has made a real impact on the schools and young people they have worked with and has ensured we have a solid evidence base within the UK as to why prevention work on VAWG is so crucial.

We also extend our thanks to the schools that participated in the project across the six regions. Thank you for recognising that this work needs to be done in schools and for allowing the projects to work with your staff and students.

Above all, thank you to the young people who took part, their voices are at the heart of this report.

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

Six projects (funded by a Comic Relief- initiative) working to prevent violence against women and girls through secondary school education were followed over the course of two years. This report documents the key learning points from the project and makes suggestions for the development of good practice in England. The report aims to support policy makers and practitioners to appreciate more fully 'what works' in prevention education and to fund and support projects that aim to create a world where women and girls are free from violence or the fear of violence.

There are many challenges for schools wishing to develop and deliver whole-school approaches to meeting the safeguarding and emotional and well-being needs of their students. Curriculum pressures mean the timetable is stretched, so that the prioritising of wellbeing education becomes difficult. In many schools there is resistance from parts of the staff team who, without appropriate training and support, are very concerned about how to discuss such a sensitive subject and how they and other school support services will be able to manage instances of violence against women and girls. Many schools are concerned that parents, carers and the wider community will not be supportive of attempts to educate our young people about this 'hidden' problem; mirrored by the lack of wider support to tackle this issue at a societal level.

Through an exciting initiative funded by Comic Relief (a UK-based donor organisation), Nottingham Domestic Violence Project, Off the Record, Respond, Southall Black Sisters, Tender and Victim Support Cornwall were selected to develop a series of whole-school approaches that sought to challenge and prevent violence against women and girls.

## 1.1 Comic Relief and AVA

To support the potential learning from the project, Comic Relief built in the resources to evaluate each individual programme of work, as well as the broader initiative. Thus, the funded organisations were encouraged to appoint a team or consultant to support them in evaluating their specific programme, while Comic Relief appointed AVA (Against Violence and Abuse) to support these individual evaluation processes as well as capture key lessons learned across the programme.

The AVA team organised regular networking meetings for all six organisations to share good practice and emerging evaluation findings. The AVA team also developed a series of research tools to be implemented across all six projects to capture information on the extent and nature of the 'problem' of violence against women and girls across all the schools involved in the programme and how the school communities felt the various prevention programmes were having an impact.

## 1.2 The data used to inform this report

Alongside the individual evaluation reports by the participating organisations, these same organisations supported AVA by:

- interviewing school leads in twelve schools across the programme at the beginning and end of the initiative;
- involving 594 young people in the completion of a survey at the beginning of the initiative and 542 young people in completing a questionnaire at the end of the programme;
- facilitating group discussions before and after the programme in each school, involving over 300 young people.

Other key issues and learning points were collected during the six network meetings organised for all participating organisations over the course of the two-year programme.

### 1.3 The focus of this report

This report has been written with the needs of senior leaders within schools (including Governing Bodies) and third sector organisations who might be able to develop or support the initiation of violence against women and girls prevention work in schools in mind. While national policy makers need to understand the highly relevant nature of the ‘problem’ of violence against women and girls on the safety, wellbeing and educational achievement of our young people, and support where possible funding decisions and policy development to meet these needs – in the current policy environment, a focus on school leadership teams and organisations could work in partnership with schools to develop successful strategies for challenging violence against women and girls is most appropriate.

The report reviews and further supports the strong evidence of the ‘problem’ and diversity of the issue of violence against women and girls, and points to the numerous ways in which this issue affects schools, learning and wellbeing. A review of the different programmes developed by the six organisations funded by Comic Relief to innovate around violence against women and girls prevention work in schools is then offered, as well as the evidence highlighting how such investment has an impact. Finally, the report offers schools and third sector organisations a range of strategies for developing a range of approaches to preventing violence against women and girls in schools – including work in schools with large black and minority ethnic populations, for students with learning disabilities, through a focus on drama, via the PSHCE curriculum or integrated into other curricula areas, and/or programmes that take as their starting point an emphasis on strong youth participation.

## 2 WHAT IS VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS – SETTING THE SCENE

*It [experiences of violence against women and girls] robs them of their self-worth, of their self-esteem, of their confidence. It can damage current relationships, future relationships, sort of trust, all the sort of, things that we look to instil in our young people (senior leadership team member).*

The internationally-agreed definition, as set out in the UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, defines violence against women and girls as:

*Any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women [or girls], including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life<sup>1</sup>.*

*Violence against women shall be understood to encompass, but not be limited to, the following:*

- a) *Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family, including battering, sexual abuse of female children in the household, dowry-related violence, marital rape, female genital mutilation and other traditional practices harmful to women, nonspousal violence and violence related to exploitation;*
- b) *Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring within the general community, including rape, sexual abuse, sexual harassment and intimidation at work, in educational institutions and elsewhere, trafficking in women and forced prostitution;*
- c) *Physical, sexual and psychological violence perpetrated or condoned by the State, wherever it occurs.*

Girls and young women under the age of 18 years are further subject to violence when they suffer the ‘neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation’ that is part of the broader definition of violence against children.

According to the World Health Organisation - ‘violence diminishes women’s and girls’ ability to gain an education, earn a living and participate in public life, and has significant health impacts, including psychological consequences, physical injuries, sexual/reproductive health issues and death.’

Please see the WHO fact sheet on VAWG for more information.

<http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs239/en/index.html>

Such an internationally agreed definition is important to bear in mind, but through this report we would like to offer a more school-specific, UK-centric understanding, to help schools and third sector organisations work with an understanding that most closely fits with research in UK schools, and facilitates the prioritisation of the key aspects of violence against women and girls they might like to initially focus on.

This part of the report reviews the evidence of the extent, nature and impact of violence against women and girls in the UK.

### 2.1 An ecological approach to understanding violence against women and girls

Previous academic work has concluded that no single cause adequately accounts for violence against women, rather it is ‘a convergence of specific factors within the broad context of power inequalities at the individual, group, national and global levels<sup>2</sup> – in terms of the factors that shape the problem,

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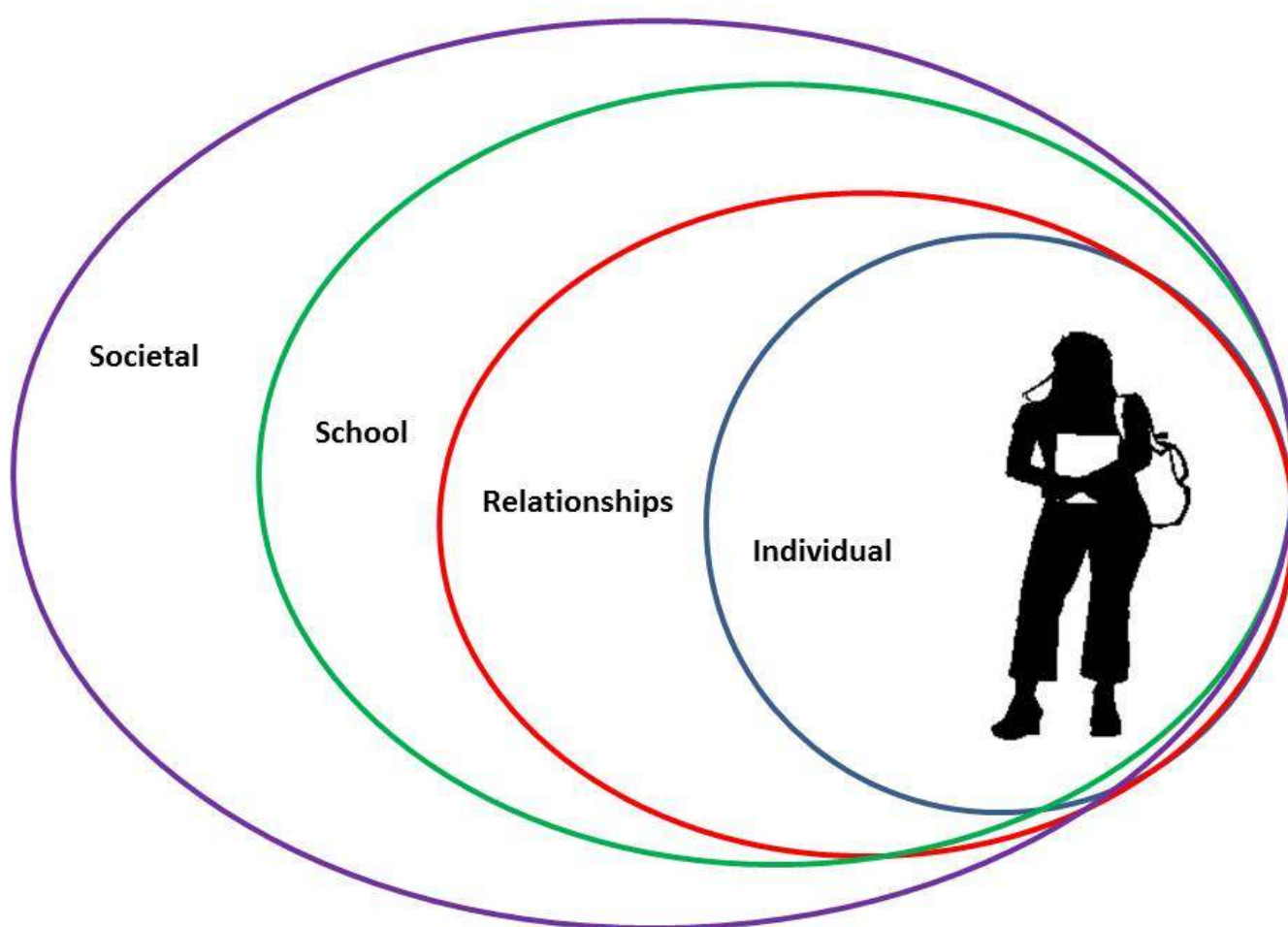
<sup>1</sup> Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, Article 1, 1993

<sup>2</sup> United Nations General Assembly (2006) In-Depth Study on All Forms of Violence against Women: Report of the Secretary General, A/61/122/Add. 1, para 67.

perpetuate it and are impacted by it. While many will appreciate how experiences of violence against women and girls will impact an individual and even be perpetuated by an individual (either through abusive behaviour, attitudes, collusion or standing by silently), it is crucial to understand how schools (as well as other institutions and groups) are influenced by violence against women and girls.

The 'ecological model' has been developed as a way to understand the complex and intersecting factors contributing to violence against women and girls. The model identifies variables that can increase or reduce the risk of experiencing violence. These are shown at various 'levels,' as well as by the inter-relationship between the risk factors. The original model (which can be found here: [http://www.who.int/violence\\_injury\\_prevention/violence/world\\_report/en/summary\\_en.pdf](http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/violence/world_report/en/summary_en.pdf)) has been adapted for this report and shows how a young woman's risk of experiencing violence can be impacted at various levels; as an individual, via relationships, within the school community and at a broader societal level.

**Figure 1 – ecological diagram**



The accompanying table below shows the risks at each level and the protective factors identified by this report and the work of the grass root organisations.

**Table 1 – risk and protective factors at different levels of the ecological model**

<b>Level</b>	<b>Risks</b>	<b>Protective Factors</b>
<b>Individual</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Early trauma</li> <li>• Substance use</li> <li>• Mental health issues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Routine screening for violence against women and girls (VAWG) across all relevant services</li> </ul>
<b>Relationships</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Negative influences from peers</li> <li>• Witnessing abuse at home</li> <li>• Experiencing abuse in intimate relationships</li> <li>• Rigid construction of what it means to be a man/woman</li> <li>• Enforcement of so called ‘honour’ codes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Peer disapproval of VAWG</li> <li>• Alternative, ‘healthier’ concepts of masculinity</li> </ul>
<b>School Community</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of challenging of inappropriate behaviour and attitudes</li> <li>• No discussion of un/healthy relationships in curriculum</li> <li>• Limited teacher training</li> <li>• Lack of specific policies relating to VAWG</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff and governor training</li> <li>• Inclusion of relevant VAWG issues in policies</li> <li>• Cross-curricular work on VAWG</li> <li>• Staff confident to challenge inappropriate behaviours and attitudes</li> <li>• Staff confident about being able to identify abuse (including teenage relationship abuse)</li> <li>• Young people empowered to support friends and challenge inequality</li> <li>• A whole school approach to ending VAWG</li> <li>• Engaging parents in this work</li> </ul>
<b>Society</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acceptance and normalisation of VAWG</li> <li>• Victim blaming attitudes</li> <li>• Patriarchal dominance and control over women</li> <li>• Rigid gender roles</li> <li>• Limited opportunities for women and girls</li> <li>• Gender inequality</li> <li>• Media sexualisation and objectification of women</li> <li>• Limited prosecutions/sanctions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National awareness raising campaigns (e.g. the Home Office ‘this is abuse’ campaign)</li> <li>• Amending domestic violence definition to include 16-17 year olds</li> <li>• Specialist training for all relevant professionals</li> <li>• Regulation of media portrayal of women</li> <li>• Promote healthy models of masculinity</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of specific services for young people affected by VAWG</li> <li>• Lack of specific services for young people using abuse in relationships</li> <li>• Inability for young people to access welfare benefits or hold tenancies</li> <li>• No clear guidance as to boundaries between child protection and domestic violence services and thresholds</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Achieve gender equality</li> <li>• Effective multi-agency working and information sharing</li> <li>• Increase conviction rates of offenders</li> <li>• Ring fenced funding for specialist services for young people</li> <li>• Development of national guidance relating to definition amendment</li> </ul>
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Attitudes towards men and women feed into the way male and female members of our school communities are positioned – the expectations we have of them, the ways they are treated and whether or not such treatment is seen as ‘acceptable’. Experiences of violence against women and girls (from (online) sexualised bullying, to the fear of being forced into marriage, to experiences of violence or abusive attitudes within peer-level intimate relationship or between members of a family at home) will also influence the extent to which individual students and members of staff can engage with their school – as learners, as members of that community.

## 2.2 The prevalence of violence against women and girls

- 33% of girls and 16% of boys reported some form of sexual abuse.
- 25% of girls (the same proportion as adult women) and 18% of boys reported some form of physical relationship abuse
- 75% of girls and 50% of boys reported some form of emotional relationship abuse

NSPCC (2009) *Partner exploitation and violence in teenage intimate relationships* Christine Barter et al

58% of all 14-17 year-olds have viewed pornography online, on mobile phones, in magazines, movies or on TV.

In the same survey nearly three in ten teenagers said they needed more sex and relationships education.

YouGov (2009) "Sex Education" survey for Channel 4

### Young People in the UK Today

One in three UK teenagers have received 'sexually suggestive' messages

*Cross, Richardson and Douglas (2009)*

One in four 11 to 18-year-olds have received a "sext" by phone or email

Beatbullying (2009) *Virtual Violence: Protecting Children From Cyberbullying*

Over a third of girls (37%) and over a quarter of boys (27%) know at least one person who had become pregnant following non-consensual sex.

Coy et al. (2010) *A missing link?: An exploratory study of the connections between non-consensual sex and teenage pregnancy*

16,500 children are estimated to be at high risk of sexual exploitation

*The Office of the Children's Commissioner (2012)*

Almost one in three 16-18 year-old girls have experienced 'groping' or other unwanted sexual touching at school

*EVAW YouGov Poll (2010)*

At least 750,000 children a year witness domestic violence and it is estimated that 3-5 children in a class of 30 are likely to be witnessing violence at home.

*Department of Health (2002)*

## 2.3 Mapping out how violence against women and girls occurs within our schools

Informed by a wide reading of the broader research and academic literatures relevant to violence against women and girls, our research in schools through the six organisations offers an accessible way of understanding the numerous ways in which broader structural issues (shown to cause and perpetuate violence against women and girls) play out in our classrooms, the playground, within peer groups and how this significantly shapes how the issue of violence against women and girls affects and is reproduced by so many of our young people and the broader school community.

**Figure 2 – how violence against women and girls happens in our schools**



### 2.3.1 Daily occurrence of sexual bullying and domestic violence

*We deal with it on an almost daily basis with students who've got violence going on in the home or around (senior leadership team member).*

*I have so many neighbours who you can literally hear their husbands beating them up. It's through the curtains, but you know what's going on (young woman).*

*I think because of the area, and because I have become aware that a large number of girls that come into contact with social services do so because of domestic violence. We also know about girls in gangs.... And we have heard a couple of things about girls being forced into sexual relationships. We already had a girl in year 10, whose boyfriend has hit her twice already. We know that these are big issues for young women. We know that girls have a lot of pressure, so we hope this is a way for them to develop strategies, their self-esteem and awareness (senior leadership team member).*

*Sexual bullying is where erm you know a girl has maybe sent a photograph of herself you know with or without her top on or something like that to her boyfriend and then the boyfriend's passed it around and all the girls in ... and then they get hold of it you know and so there's that sort of sharing, sharing that sort of image, that's the sort of thing that we get now (teacher).*

All around, members of the school community are available of forms of violence against women and girls. While attitudes to domestic violence are more clearly negative, the less physically obvious, day-to-day incidences of sexual harassment and sexual bullying are often interpreted as somehow different to violence in the home and more as a normal, everyday part of school life.

Because of the every-day nature of this sexual bullying for instance, both staff and young people seemed often unsure whether or how to challenge it and appropriately handle these incidences when they occurred within the school and during peer groups interactions (inside and outside the school).

If incidences are ignored or left unchallenged because there is a lack of confidence in identifying them as not-normal, or behaviours that shouldn't be accepted – this indirectly condones them.

### 2.3.2 The 'silencing' of students (and staff) when they experience harassment, bullying or violence.

This was partly fed by the accepted, every-day nature of low-level but also more extreme forms of sexual bullying, but also because many young people reported they did not trust the school staff. Young people thought they would not be believed, that it would be embarrassing for both parties (student and teacher) and that others would immediately be told. But this lack of trust can be changed, by starting to talk about the issues as a school.

*It's not like a very talked about like the subject because a lot of people don't really want to talk about problems like this because I think they maybe feel as if it's like not something to talk about because it's quite a sad subject and everything but then like after all the classes [led by the third sector organisations funded to do the work] and everything I think a lot of the students do feel more like better about talking about it and stuff, so... that now they're like, can talk about these kind of problems and like learn to cope and help other people and like know what to do and stuff if they were ever in that situation (young woman).*

### 2.3.3 A lack of vocabulary and understanding of what violence against women and girls means

Young people and staff identified domestic violence as being a form of violence against women and girls, but many young people did not understand or know how to discuss concepts such as 'consent', 'respectful relationships' and so forth. It is hard to talk about something if you do not have the language to do so!

At the beginning of the work in schools, for instance, some young people thought 'sexual consent' referred to the age of at which it was legal to have sex or was related to whether a condom was used or not. The need to recognise that young people have a right 'to say no' is critical to enable young people to understand that they should seek to make a choice about sex, and that it should be a negotiated encounter.

In response to the question, 'what does sexual consent mean?', young people offered a range of views:

- If you are over 18, then you are allowed to have sex
- If you are thinking about having a baby
- When you ask parents for permission to have sex
- Giving consent for sex, except when you're drunk
- It's allowing your partner to share a sexual relationship with you, but you're not forced into it. So its not rape or something

Similarly, without developing an understanding of what respectful intimate/sexual relationships might encompass – how can young people be supported to develop the skills and awareness to try and negotiate these? However, following participation in a programme of work exploring respectful relationships, young people appeared more confident that they might be able to recognise if a relationship was (getting) abusive.

*I don't think I would have known if it was an abusive relationship or not because we didn't really know much about it like back then and stuff (young woman).*

*I haven't been in a relationship yet but I think now I have thought more about what I would be looking for and hoping for. There is always that uncertainty about what you want but I think I am more aware now (young woman).*

*My partner and I were both involved in the workshop and I think we have learnt more about each other. We were having a lot of arguments but they seem less now (young man).*

#### 2.3.4 Sexual exploitation and forced marriage

A school focus on violence against women and girls is needed – not just to support young people to identify abusive relationships and to have the skills to develop respectful ones; or to increase reporting of sexual bullying – some schools are dealing with very serious forms of abuse and exploitation:

*The response [to being involved in the programme] has just been a heightened response, you know with, sort of through increased understanding and awareness we've been able in some cases maybe to be a bit more proactive and you know maybe a little bit more forceful with some external agencies where we felt that these girls, or this family really did need more support. Or we needed something else to happen, with a particular student, like I mentioned one girl who I really, really felt needed to be taken away completely out of the area because the mother wasn't able to stop her being drawn into this group of young men, and the school, she'd stopped coming to school so we I think we were more forceful in our network meetings and child protection meetings to be able to say that we really feel, we know her, and we need her away (teacher).*

*Forced marriages, it is happening ... in my other school it was much more evident; that people were in unhealthy relationships, but here relationships are much more hidden, it's not something that is spoken about because of culture. We have a lot of Muslim and Hindu students. It's less obvious, the school don't know what is happening (teacher).*

*...it seems to be something which is much more a current issue that there's this emotional pressure on girls to sort of fit in and to be a part of a group and that this will be expected this is what being part of this group is... that you will be carrying out these sexual favours... these girls I don't think are mature enough to be able to saying that's what I really want (teacher).*

*...getting social services and other agencies to see that this isn't just rebellion, this is danger, this is exploitation and you know it went on for months and months (teacher).*

### 3 PREVENTION IN EDUCATION

It was noted at the ‘Expert Group Meeting on Prevention of Violence against Women and Girls’ in 2012<sup>3</sup> that ‘prevention of violence against women and girls remains a poorly understood concept across sectors and stakeholders’. Here we offer key reasons why schools reported they got involved in the Comic Relief-funded initiative and why all schools should get involved!

#### 3.1 ‘Schools are crucial...’

Secondary schools have an important role to play in the prevention of violence against women and girls. Education can build the knowledge, understanding and skills of young people to recognise abusive behaviour and start to challenge gender stereotypes and expectations which drive emotional or physical forms of violence. Safeguarding policies and procedures need to ensure that young people are protected from harm and are able to seek the support that they need if they experience violence. Schools can create respectful environments and cultures where students and staff are treated equally and inappropriate conduct is swiftly challenged and respectful modes of relationships are modelling and encouraged. While stopping violence against women and girls is an enormous task, schools have a vital role to play in preventing it. As one young man commented in a focus group, while schools are

*Not going to stop it [on their own], but you need to prevent it as much as you can (young man).*

*I think schools are crucial, I think they’re crucial in creating an ethos where violence isn’t tolerated (lead teacher in one of the participating schools).*

#### 3.2 ‘[It is] really going to help a lot of students...’

In the experiences of the projects, the process of engaging schools takes time and resources. Schools need to understand why this work is important and the various ways it can be integrated into their on-going work, how it will benefit the wider development and attainment of their pupils, and the kinds of relationships that are found throughout the school. It is helpful to start off identifying a champion within the school, who is interested in the issue and will make the time to develop initiatives. In the past, the leads for this kind of work are usually school lead for PSHE, drama or wellbeing.

Across our programmes, the main motivation for developing work around the prevention of violence against women and girls was for the benefit of individual students (who were known to be experiencing some form of violence), but there was also a recognition that time and some resource investment in this work would promote the well-being of the wider student population, as well as the staff team. Schools joining this national programme of innovation also had an understanding of how such work fitted into the priorities of the school, including anti-bullying and respectful relationships work.

At the beginning of the project most of the teachers interviewed were enthusiastic and positive about the development of work in the school. The main motivation for developing the work was for the benefit of individual students and to support a focus on well-being. The teachers understood that violence against women and girls would impact on the lives of young people in the school and was clearly linked to schools priorities such as keeping children safe through their child protection and anti-bullying policies and procedures. Some teachers were also motivated to be part of the programme to improve learning, behaviour and attendance in the school.

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.unwomen.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Report-of-the-EGM-on-Prevention-of-Violence-against-Women-and-Girls.pdf>

*One of the reasons that we went for the project is because this is an area of high domestic violence and most of the girls we've got who are on the child protection register because of domestic violence in their home (teacher).*

*Enriching lives and futures as well as immediate happiness and well-being of students (lead teacher for the project in one school).*

*...it will make discipline better; it will help everyone to get on with each other (lead teacher in one of the participating schools).*

*When you're living in violence, your brain cannot operate properly because you're living in fear, so most of the time in school your brain will be elsewhere so you can't learn properly (lead teacher for the project in one school).*

*I have high expectations that this is really going to help a lot of students and also we may find ourselves with cases coming to our attention because it will give students confidence in speaking out (lead teacher in one of the participating schools).*

*We are able to, to link this work to the anti-bullying work that we do and err, focus on raising awareness of healthy relationships that that's a keen area we want to follow up (teacher).*

### 3.3 'Do something about it...'

Young people at secondary school are going through a crucial time of life, exploring what it means to be a woman and a man and experimenting in their own intimate and sexual relationships. Young people need opportunities to talk about the realities of their life and to learn about respectful but also what abusive relationships look like.

*...Even though they may be young, they may be going through that [violence against women and girls] and usually when you're young you tend to get more confused and you need to know where to seek help and be more aware of the risks and stuff (young woman).*

*I think we are now stepping into the age range where it is most predominant, where it happens most. So if we start learning about it now, then we will be able to pass through that era without experiencing much of that problem (young man).*

Young people were very articulate about how challenging sexual bullying, harassment and other forms of violence against women and girls was a serious issue that impacted on the lives of young people and therefore something needed to be done about it.

*You could say it does happen, it's not like it's something that you can just brush under the carpet. It's something that is happening daily or all the time, so we need to realise that and just basically do something about it (young man).*

### 3.4 'Engage directly with these issues...'

The prevention projects aimed to develop and deliver a whole-school approach to ending violence against women and girls. They worked with school as institutions, staff and young people to start to achieve the following objectives:

**ATTITUDES:** To challenge attitudes that normalise and condone violence against women and girls

**KNOWLEDGE:** To build the skills of young people and staff to recognise and stop violence against women and girls

**UNDERSTANDING:** To develop shared understandings of the experiences of girls and young women



All projects started from the presumption that a whole school approach to the issue needed to be developed in order for the work to have the greatest impact.

*An excellent opportunity for the school to engage directly with these issues in an integrated way (lead teacher in one of the participating schools).*

### 3.5 Understanding a whole school approach

A whole-school approach was understood as being about working across the school community to engage with the issue – from school staff to students (and with less success, parents), integrating a focus on violence against women and girls within policies and the curriculum. Whole-school approaches should seek to strategically connect the key components of the school, which will increase the likelihood of prevention becoming embedded across the institution. While none of our projects were able to achieve this over a two-year period, in many cases the initial investment of time and expertise were an instigator for change. As one school lead commented:

*...the programme in itself for us is a starting point not a finishing point...'* (lead teacher in one of the participating schools).

Tender, one of the six organisations leading this work, created a model to understand the whole school approach including the different elements of a school that the project attempted to impact.

**Figure 3 – one model of a whole-school approach to the prevention of violence against women and girls in schools**



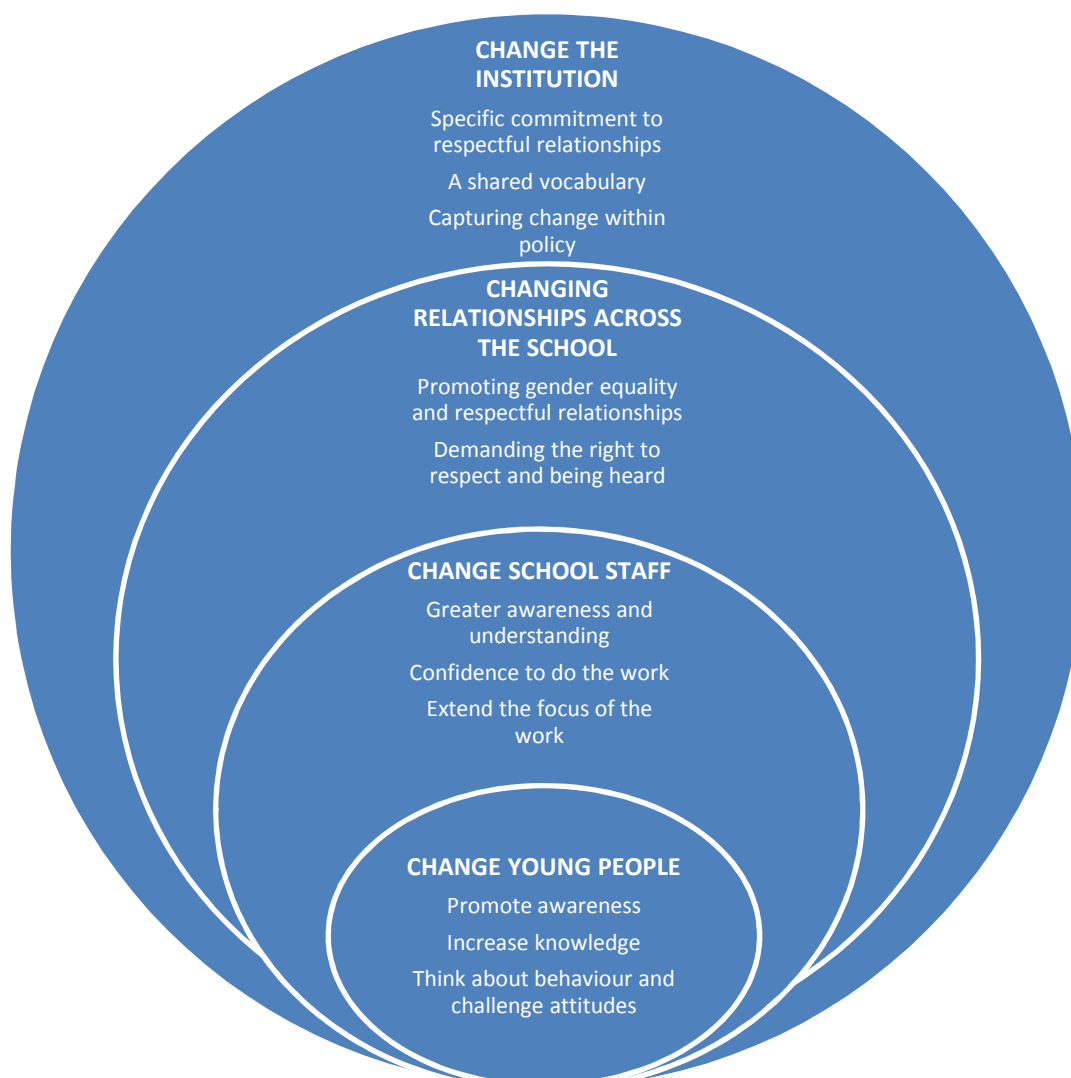


## 4 WE CAN CHANGE THINGS....

Over the 15-21 month period the six projects worked in schools, they have shown they were able (at least to start) making a difference to the lives of young people, school staff and to the broader relationships across the school. While the programmes were not able to evaluate their work using a control-group decision, data from group discussions with young people, interviews with members of staff, lesson observations were used to examine whether and how these projects had raised awareness of the issues, developed key knowledge and skills to identify and challenge behaviours and attitudes that worked against the promotion of respectful relationships.

This section of our report looks at the different levels that the projects operated at and discusses the impact of the programmes in changing knowledge, attitudes and behaviours.

**Figure 4 - how a whole-school approach might challenge violence against women and girls.**



## 4.1 Changes for young people

The projects all worked directly with young people and sought to engage them in talking, thinking and learning about violence against women and girls.

### 4.1.1 Raising awareness of the issues.

This was often done through discussing **prevalence rates** of different forms of violence against women and girls.

*...1 in 4 women. Very shocking ... we did, like, stood 4 girls up and said one of you could probably be affected (young woman)*

Young people reported they liked learning about facts and the law. It made them **more aware that is happens to many people, but also that it is not acceptable.**

*Majority in this school I would say do not disclose [if they are experiencing abuse], they may feel it is the norm – seeing it at home they may feel this is how it is meant to be. I think the project and the work [that has been done] has opened a lot of their eyes – seeing how it is not norm (senior leadership team member)*

A **focus on characteristics of unhealthy relationships** was also found to be a useful approach to engaging young people in discussions – as this was seen as very relevant to them and led to them have a stronger understanding.

Teachers and students, after learning more about the prevalence of different forms of violence against women and girls and starting to appreciate how relevant it was to their own experiences, those of their peers and local community, became strong **advocates of the need to learn about the issue in schools.** In one project, for instance, 73% of the surveyed students believed it was something they should learn about in schools.

### 4.1.2 Increasing the school community's understanding and knowledge of the issues.

One project found that students in one school reported **a 16% increase in knowledge** about these issues over the period of one year (similar to the levels reported by students in another project) – this was measured by questions before and after the project in relation to the what age group of young women had a highest prevalence of experiences related to violence against women and girls, when it became it crime for a husband to have sex with his wife against her will and being able to identify the signs of unhealthy relationships.

Through the type of early prevention work being developed by the six organisations, young people (and especially young women) began to appreciate the reality of violence against women and girls and its relevance to their own lives. For instance, being able to identify potential warning signs within their own relationships or those of friends and family members is a first step to the possibility of future violence being prevented. In one project they noted **a 19% increase in knowledge of how to recognising signs of an unhealthy relationship after intervention.**

*Before, I thought that domestic violence was 'out there' – something unfortunate that happens to a few couples. But I realize now how common it is. It is imprinted on my mind now. The early warning signs were a new thought to me. (young person)*

The focus group discussion exchange below also illustrates how just starting to talk about the issues, and the prevalence supports the **process of embedding the ideas and the potential for such conversations to continue**:

Young man 1: *It happens to like, everybody, like all of the time. It's like...aww, sorry...I don't think children, teenagers today, realise how often it happens. We always think, like, oh, one every hundred million and things like that.*

Young man 2: *Yeah.*

Young man 3: *Instead, you could walk down the street and you could look at 100 people and you can say: this happened, they've been sexually bullied or abused or violence against women or something like that. I don't think you know like, or guess how many out of a thousand women.*

Another focus for most of the projects was the **negotiation of, and respect for, (sexual) consent**. This created opportunities for young people to discuss the concept sexual consent, start to identify their own ability to consent or not consent to sexual and intimate relationships, and recognise sexual abuse. Discussions in classes, drama productions or posters around the school raised awareness of what abusive behaviour was, which had the potential for changing young people's perception of what they may have previously thought of as normal or acceptable within their own relationships or others' experiences. In focus groups young women, in particular, were showing how they had begun to apply this knowledge to their own current or potential future relationships.

*I know a lot of people in our lesson didn't think it was rape if a guy was pressuring her to have sex with him and she said 'no'. Like if it was her boyfriend. Like a lot of the people in class said that's not actual rape. I think they must have learnt a lot from that and they now know it is rape. I found that quite a surprise. (young woman in an all-girls focus group)*

*We know what to look out for now. (young woman in a mixed focus group)*

*Yeah, like I don't think I would have known if it was an abusive relationship or not because we didn't really know much about it like back then and stuff. (young woman in an all-girls focus group)*

#### 4.1.3 Thinking further about own and others behaviours – and beginning to challenge these.

Young people reported that they wanted to continue learning about violence against women and girls. Some young men explained that they wanted to understand how to stop it, to recognise the abuse in young women's lives and help support them.

*Instead of us just learning, 'Oh, this, this and this happened as well like'. Learning what you can if you find yourself in that situation. Or if you have a friend that you know is in that position. Someone who knows about that kind of situation. [inaudible] So that you can do something about it, like, 'What can I do to help my mate or someone I know to stop doing that or how do I stop doing that?' (young man)*

Increased understanding of the issues and the **introduction to some new vocabularies to discuss these, meant young people did report an increase in knowing about abuse and violence against women and girls which was occurring in their communities**. For instance, one of the projects that worked specifically on violence against women and girls with black and minority ethnic communities noted a 10% increase over the life of the project in those reporting they knew someone who was being pressured into getting married. This may seem like a small increase, but given the culturally ingrained nature of this issue, it is an important first step towards a potentially greater impact.

Another sign of impact was a shift in young people across all participating programmes from **responding 'unsure' to particular attitudinal and knowledge statements to a firmer 'yes' or 'no'** in response to the same questions one year on. For instance, one project found an average of a 15-20% swing from 'can't make up my mind' responses to responses that challenging these statements:

- I'd stay with a partner who was sometimes violent if I thought they really loved me
- A married man should be able to have sex with his wife whenever he wants
- It's OK for a boy to force a girl to have sex with him if she has flirted with him or led him on
- **\*\*Domestic violence can be excused if the violent person really regrets what they have done**
- Often violence is the only way people can express their feelings
- **\*\*If a husband hits his wife in their own home it's got nothing to do with anyone else**
- Most men cannot control their temper
- Hitting someone can be a sign of love

Changes in attitudes were particularly high for the statements which are stated above (\*\*). Another project reported similarly positive changes in attitudes:

- A fall from 74% to 51% strongly agreeing that women and girls were sometimes responsible for the violence they experienced and a rise from 23% to 45% reporting they felt women and girls were never responsible.
- An increase from 35% to 52% of students saying they strongly agreed that men and boys should stand up to other men and boys to stop violence against women and girls.

#### **Teachers also noted changes in the young people's attitudes within lessons.**

*The students attitudes are being challenged in PSHE so this has definitely been noticed more (PSHE lead).*

*The students have definitely sat up and thought more... You can see them really engaged in what is appropriate behaviours in relationships, really thinking about what they're doing and then the penny drops and their peers start to challenge views – it's amazing. (PSHE lead)*

Young people understood that key to changing attitudes was the development of empathy.

*If you've got good empathy then obviously you can empathise with people that have been in that situation, which helps you understand it more (young man).*

**Benefits of being involved in more intensive work via the projects** led some teachers to report that these sessions had **increased the confidence and self-esteem of the young people involved**. This appeared particularly to be the case for those involved in the development of a piece of drama about violence against women and girls, or via youth involvement projects – such as becoming peer educators, or ambassadors for the work in their schools.

*A couple of girls were getting detentions for poor behaviour [before their involvement in the drama group] and this has reduced dramatically if not completely ceased. I have seen a real boost in their self-esteem through being attached to the project (teacher).*

*I learnt how to be more confident when talking to a huge group of people (young woman).*

Teachers also reported that young people who had been harder to engage previously in the life of the school, had passionately committed to the project, which in turn had appeared to raise their confidence and aspirations.

*The group commitment has surprised me, I know these youngsters and I must say I was quite shocked they got involved, they are the ones that do not normally come forward to do something like this – and to stick at it is amazing. They have grown in confidence and their commitment has been commendable (lead teacher in one of the participating schools).*

Another way of measuring positive change – was the **attainment of students where the violence against women and girls work became part of their assessed work:**

*All eight who took that unit (as part of A Level drama) got distinctions and had the most incredible experience. I think there were several levels of impact – the message about healthy relationships, the impact it had on the quality of their drama. The issue was so emotive and so important that it made their drama better (teacher).*

All these factors begin to make possible actual changes in behaviours and attitudes. For instance, during focus groups discussions held at the beginning of the projects, many young people felt that the school culture normalised sexual bullying. However, as a result of some of initiatives, young people demonstrated a **shift in their understandings of what sexual bullying was and the potential for changing their own behaviours and/or challenging others.**

*I think because sometimes you don't think that it could be like sexual bullying or whatever, but you could be doing it so and you're not actually realising, you think it's just a bit of fun. It's being more careful of what you do (young man in a mixed-sex focus group at the end of the programme)*

*We started noticing things in school, like conversations between people and wondered if they were OK or abusive. We felt more aware. So someone might be joking around and before we might have ignored it but now we thought, 'No, that's not right!' (young woman).*

Another important measure of change was **a shift in confidence to disclose and report abusive experiences.** While the questionnaire data at the beginning of the programme suggested young people thought teachers would take sexual bullying, rape and teenage relationship abuse seriously – always (average 50%) and sometimes (average 30%) – during focus group discussions concerns about levels of confidentiality and being taken seriously were a significant barrier for individuals considering reporting abuse. At the end of the programme, while young people were still more likely to report they would confide in a friend or parent, young people appeared more confident about knowing what to do and where to go (26% - very confident; 49% - confident).

*If it happens to us we know we can talk to other people now, before we wouldn't have known what to do if we were in that relationship later on (young woman).*

*Talking more about these issues has created a sense of support for these students; they are more aware of situations and recognise it is not norm (PSHE lead).*

*I used the advice I had learnt in school to help someone outside school ... (young woman).*

*My friend was in a relationship without too much trust, and after [my involvement in the programme] I felt, 'If you are not enjoying the relationship you might as well get out before anything becomes too serious' ... [my friend] got a lot of out [my advice to her], and I thought that's what [the programme] has taught me. [My friend] got out of the relationship, moved on ... (young woman).*

It is hard in such a short space of time, and with limited resources to evaluate quite different projects, to identify *actual* behaviour changes. However, one specific example illustrates how involvement in such a project can lead to behaviour change – not only prompting an individual to re-consider his or her behaviour, but also to feel confident about speaking out about it within school.

*I know we had one young boy, a Year 7 lad, he came up to us at the end and said he's worried about the way he spoke and behaved towards his mum ... and he'd never thought about it before and we taught that to him (lead teacher in one of the participating schools).*

*One girl realised her mum was being abused. She was on the outskirts and would hardly come in the door at some points but she realised (teacher in a special needs school).*

While there are some indications of attitudes shifting slightly and own behaviours and those of others being challenged, it must be emphasized that, at least for the length of intervention and period of time the projects were evaluated, the strongest shift was in levels of knowledge. Attitudes and behaviours driving violence against women and girls are more culturally engrained and therefore take longer to change.

## 4.2 Changes for school staff

A second fundamental aspect of all projects' work on the programme was to train up and support staff in participating schools. While provision of training to staff was more challenging to organise, important strides were made in ensuring that staff teams become more aware of the need, and more confident about leading change through schools in relation to violence against women and girls work. As with young people, a key first step was to raise awareness among staff of the issues.

### 4.2.1 Developing a greater awareness and understanding.

Although many teachers had some awareness of the range of violence against women and girls issues affecting their school communities, through training and their participation in the project led them to gain a deeper understanding of the issues and saw how violence against women and girls impacted at all levels of a young women's life. For instance, in one project, 76% of teachers said that being part of the initiatives in their schools had taught them something that they did not know beforehand. Furthermore, 74% of teachers said they had noticed more unhealthy relationships across the school than beforehand.

*I was shocked by the statistics you [the project worker] brought into Assembly and in the teacher training session – especially how many young people think it is 'OK' to hit their partners – shocking! (lead teacher in one of the participating schools).*

*[The training for our staff] has significantly raised awareness in groups of staff ... there is a belief that we need to do something about this. That it's such an important issue for young women and we need to make sure everyone in the school gets to know more (teacher).*

*[The training] opened our eyes, and helped us to understand a bit better why some of these girls [who are in abusive situations] can't stand back and see what we are seeing [and helped us see] what else we needed to do (teacher).*

Crucially, school staff interviewed in many of the schools seemed to have shifted the way they viewed the issue from **understanding it as a child protection issue to appreciating how it affected the whole-person and the broader society.**

The engagement with the broader staff team was also crucial to **tackle resistance to the need for the programme** and the lack of awareness of the extent of the problem of violence against women and girls and the impact it can have on the school community.

*The first event we did there were quite a lot of staff going, 'Oh what are we doing this for, this is a bit...', and I think over the two-years I think [the programme] has had an impact and I think it has become much more high profile and I think staff are seeing that it's actually quite an important*



*thing to be doing with a student ... I think that some of the male staff were quite defensive initially but I think they're seeing it more globally now (teacher).*

#### 4.2.2 Becoming more confident in talking to young people about the issues.

Provision of staff training, resources and/or team-teaching, staff reported an increased confidence to deliver sessions and support young people. Although many staff still argued for the need for external expertise; in some projects where staff were given accessible resources and were trained in facilitating these activities, they reported feeling more confident to deliver their own sessions with young people in the future.

*I think staff feel more equipped to talk about and address issues they are more confident knowing the resource is there and we can access support in using it (PSHE Lead).*

Staff in some schools also reported an increased confidence to deal with disclosures and to respond to the needs of those young women experiencing abusive of some form. One teacher firmly stated, rather than a focus on violence against women and girls 'opening of a can of worms', the school's involvement in the programme had enhanced the capacity and ability of staff to respond to the needs of young women.

*No, I don't think it has led to more disclosures I just think it's led to increased confidence in staff to be able to help in the school, because obviously as soon as there's a disclosure it goes to social services but we're left with the girl in school and so supporting the girl in school, whatever needs to be sorted out but you know it's the confidence in the staff to be able to respond and support the girl who's in the school (teacher).*

#### 4.2.3 Extending the work beyond the delivery of facts.

An improved understanding of violence against women and girls among staff teams also began to be reflected in the broader actions that staff took within the participating schools. Some teachers reported that they now looked beyond the delivery of lessons, to seeking to facilitate more respectful group dynamics. Such aspirations and intentions resulted in changes to the way in which staff delivered lessons, challenged inappropriate behaviour and reported incidences of abuse. In one school there was a 300% increase in sexual bullying being logged by the staff.

*We've also had, you know over 300% increase in the number of logged incidents of a sexual bullying nature err, which again points to staff just picking up on the issue and having that awareness and having that confidence to take action and to challenge it (senior leadership team member).*

However, these very positive outcomes do need to be viewed in light of the fact that whole school staff training rarely occurred and even the extent to which smaller groups of staff could be involved in more in-depth training was limited. What appeared to have most impact was where teaching staff worked alongside project workers in the classroom – thereby deepening their knowledge of the issues, observing the facilitation skills of the project lead, accessing new activities and resources and modelling how the external project workers dealt with challenging questions and group interactions on the issues explored.

### 4.3 Changing relationships across the school

With increased awareness of the issues, the dynamics of abuses of power within relationships, and motivation to challenge negative attitudes and behaviours by young people and the staff – the hope for such prevention work is to change the nature of relationships across the school and beyond. The

programme being discussed in this report was of a relatively short-term nature, delivered at different levels of intensity, in different format across the participating schools – but what emerging evidence do we have for identifying a positive impact of such work on the nature of relationships within schools?

#### 4.3.1 Challenging gender stereotypes, promote gender equality and respectful communication between sexes.

One way this was done, according to one student was,

*Now they are making sure boys and girls sit together and work together. You can work together to build a friendship so they can trust in you and later they can confide in you (young man).*

*There's an openness now which wasn't there before. We've got many teachers who actively will match up boys and girls into groups, so it's you know trying to break down divides, trying to promote healthy working relationships, and again just breaking down those attitudes that would develop into control, power, violence against women and girls, so there's been a real shift in that, quite a deliberate shift by certainly one or two of our departments are really focusing on that (senior leadership team member).*

*In terms of behaviour change of staff, there are staff who positively take action to promote healthy relationships between mixed gender groups, which wouldn't happen in other schools and it's deliberately done to develop healthy relationships to develop an understanding of how to work together effectively and to combat and challenge violence against women and girls... (teacher).*

#### 4.3.2 Demanding the right to be treated respectfully and being heard

For many young people, especially young women, they started to 'speak out' about abusive or sexist attitudes and experiences within the confines and safety of a small group (an approach developed by many of the projects). These comfortable spaces supported the young women to feel they needed to vocalise their sense of injustice beyond the boundaries of the group. The following comment by a young woman in a focus group discussion illuminates one of the experiences which motivated this desire to 'speak out' and challenge attitudes and behaviours:

*It just makes you really angry because after the lessons ... the boys were joking about [domestic violence] and made us [the girls] feel really angry because it's not very nice to talk about it and to joke about it (young woman)*

Subsequently, a teacher in the same school reported to one of the project workers:

*[I have noted a] definite change in attitude and behaviour amongst girls in particular and all seem to recognise and almost demand their right to be respected which in turn is educating the boys around what is acceptable behaviour from them (teacher).*

The work of the various peer educators, Ambassadors or Youth Involvement Team roles developed by the various projects were another way in which young people begun speak out to others about their experiences and challenge attitudes and behaviours.

*The [youth involvement] group have been active in being part of changing our bullying policy and this has had a massive impact on the school, the students feel strongly about something and they make it happen and we have to listen. This is a new cultural shift as we learn more about young people's involvement and leadership (PSHE lead).*



In turn, it appeared as if some young men within the participating schools responded well to demands from their female peers for a change, so some of these comments might suggest:

*It's different now. Boys and girls will talk about their feelings. Before, we [the boys] didn't care. If the girls had a problem we didn't really care because we didn't know how to solve the problem, but now we do (young man).*

*We respect by listening, by keeping it confidential and by not starting rumours about them, and always being on their side (young man).*

#### 4.4 Changes to school cultures

Projects, developing a whole-school approach ultimately hoped to effect change at the school level and facilitate changes to school cultures which promoted gender equality and challenged violence against women and girls. Most schools would argue they place emphasis on equalities, inclusion, respect. However, recognising the significant issues remaining within our societies and schools around violence against women and girls and including this in the broader work around inclusion and equality is a necessary step for such work. Some of the schools participating in the programme appeared to be moving in this direction.

##### 4.4.1 A specific commitment to respectful relationships between men and women.

*The culture of our school being an all-girls school has always had an ethos of women's rights ... this hasn't changed much just that we have added to it more on the relationship side of things (senior leadership team member).*

*The school culture has always been an engaged, community school. This work can only improve that raising awareness and encouraging students to not put up with it and to demand respect in relationships (PSHE lead).*

##### 4.4.2 Developing a shared vocabulary

*With it being steadily adopted into different [curriculum] subjects and at different times ... there's been ... pervaded the atmosphere of what's happening here. So we have had people who, at risk students who, have disclosed things that have happened to their friends, to their cousins in the past, picking up on historical issues, often anecdotally and they wouldn't have done that, had that ability to open up about those situations, had it not been for the project (senior leadership team member).*

The emergence of this a potentially new culture of greater openness, trust and a shared vocabulary was also articulated by a few young people.

*It's not like a very talked about like the subject because a lot of people don't really want to talk about problems like this because I think they maybe feel as if it's like not something to talk about because it's quite a sad subject and everything but then like after all the classes [delivered as part of the project] and everything I think a lot of the students do feel more like better about talking about it and stuff, so ... that now they're like, can talk about these kind of problems and like learn to cope and help other people and like know what to do and stuff if they were ever in that situation (young woman).*

##### 4.4.3 Capturing a change of culture within policy

The degree to which schools engaged with the suggestion behind most of the whole-school approaches proposed by the participating projects in relation to updated policies to more accurately incorporate a focus on the various forms of violence against women and girls was more uneven. Most teachers

reported that they felt their anti-bullying and child protection policies, for instance, were effective, though often interviewees were unsure whether sexual bullying was specifically mentioned in their bullying policies, and there was some acknowledgement that the policies might not be as well-known about or well enough implemented as they could be. Some respondents commented that Ofsted appeared concerned with seeing how policies were being actioned, so some schools were motivated to enact policy changes as well or use policy documents to capture changes in practices and culture within the school. As a result of the programme of work, for instance, a very small number of schools updated their bullying policy to explicitly record sexual bullying incidences.

*It's embedded within our school development plan in the behaviour, keeping girls safe and improving behaviour which is the way Ofsted are clumping things together, behaviour and safety go together so we've got a section of our development plan that is teaching, keeping girls safe and teaching them how to stay safe so that's one of our sort of like school aims is to teach the girls about safety and that includes safety within relationships and so keeping them safe when things are going wrong and also teaching them how to try and keep themselves safe (teacher).*

While policy changes were not always made – 'practices' were changing according to some interviews with schools leads. In one school, a young man who was just about to be made Head Boy was stripped of this title after he shouted 'who likes to get raped?' in the presence of a female teacher. The member of the senior leadership team explained such a consequence to this behaviour might not have been supported in quite the same way prior to the school becoming involved in the project,

*That was such a message to our 6th formers. Sometimes things just fall into place, and we had just had whole staff training, and she is that kind of teacher, she would have picked up on that anyway, but the way that people fell in behind the decision was really good (senior leadership team member).*

*I think [the project] has changed how we do things. Various staff within the Inclusion Team now flag up issues around unhealthy relationships. The more you pick away at it - the more you don't accept casual language, the more you challenge it - both with boys and teaching staff – [the more you see change]. Before they would say, 'Oh, I was only joking', now it's more like, 'I really didn't mean that' (teacher).*

## 5 WHAT WORKS... types of approaches

The projects all delivered different approaches tailored to the needs of the young people and the school that they worked with but there are some key elements to delivery that we have drawn together in a '*menu for prevention*'. Overseeing such a large and innovative project has given us the opportunity to work as a large team to debate and decide what the key components of a prevention programme in schools should include, and include examples of good practice.

Changes in attitude and behaviour were created through the implementation of different methodologies to facilitate learning about violence against women and girls.

### A Menu for prevention

#### For starters:

1. Protect young women and girls in the school through the implementation of child protection and safeguarding policy and procedure
2. Build partnerships with local services and women's organisations
3. Train the staff team to handle disclosures and facilitate lessons
4. Make content relevant to the local environment

#### For main:

5. Use stories to build young people's knowledge and understanding of violence against women and girls. encourage empathy
6. State the facts, stats and laws relating to violence against women and girls
7. Involve young people in the design, content and delivery of interventions
8. Interactive and safe delivery of lessons
9. Link across the school curriculum
10. Make some noise
11. Deliver a comprehensive programme

## 5.1 Safeguarding

Violence against women and girls work needs to be seen and understood as a child protection issue. There may be different resources available, different professionals involved and different legal definitions but, if we combine our understanding of child abuse with violence against women and girls - to understand why it happens, who is doing it, what it is and what effects it has - then we can see that there are many similarities, not least of which is that there is a shared cause, i.e. an abuse of male power.

In our experience of working in schools to educate young people about abuse, we have found that many teachers are unsure about how to respond to disclosures of abuse. They do not seem to see it as a child protection issue like any other they may encounter. Additionally, gender-based abuse is often not mentioned in child protection policy and procedures. The impacts of violence against women and girls-related issues on children and young people can have a devastating impact and as such they need to be protected as they would be from bullying, neglect and other forms of abuse.

It is vital to protect and educate *all* children, not just those who we know have been abused so that educating children and young people in schools about domestic violence, for example, is seen as an essential component of a child protection strategy.

Child protection procedures designed to protect and support young people are failing to create school environments where young people can ask for help and have their needs and concerns listened to. There is a general misunderstanding and fear of disclosure which increases the vulnerability of young people and often halts early intervention that could potentially stop the problem before it becomes worse. Students have received mixed messages about confidentiality within schools and this is a barrier to them reporting, particularly as they fear the teacher will talk to their parents or to other teachers without their consent. Many young people also appeared to question the expertise of teachers in this area.

In the focus group before programmes of work begun across the various schools, there was a lot of discussion about how the young people did not trust the teachers and felt unable to talk to them about any incidences of violence against women and girls. However, in the focus group discussions which took place at the end of the programme, there appeared to be more trust in the teachers, in part because discussions about such issues had been opened up.

Most young people were clear that they were not comfortable talking to all school staff, but could identify one or two whom they felt they could trust. The majority of young people, however, remained concerned about what might happen once they disclosed or mentioned any concerns they might have.

Young woman: *If I told a strict teacher [if they or a friend was experiencing domestic violence], the reason they're strict is because they follow the rules, and if they follow the rules then there is obviously confidentiality rules, there's disclosure rules, health and safety rules, things like that, and I know that would be dealt with properly...*

Young man: *And also... a strict teacher would give you advice on the situation that's happening and just properly give you something that would actually help you rather than giving you advice to just try and make you feel better.*

(Mixed-sex focus group discussion)

### FOR EXAMPLE

In one London school a teacher reported that the staff had developed a strong understanding of their protective role which had increased the safety of the young women in the school. The staff had gained an increased understanding of violence against women and girls from specific training and generally being a part of the project. This meant that they felt able to really listen to, and understand, the needs of a young woman in the school. In one case the school lead for the project reported that they were then able to advocate for a young woman's needs and ensure that she received adequate support and protection.

*I think the response has just been a heightened response, through increased understanding and awareness we've been able in some cases maybe to be a bit more proactive and you know maybe a little bit more forceful with some external agencies where we felt that these girls, or this family really did need more support. or we needed something else to happen, with a particular student, like I mentioned one girl who I really, really felt needed to be taken away completely out of the area because the mother wasn't able to stop her being drawn into this group of young men and the school, she'd stopped coming to school so we I think we were more forceful in our network meetings and child protection meetings to be able to say that we really feel, we know her, and we need her away (lead teacher in one of the participating schools).*

## 5.2 Partnership

This programme was made up of six different organisations building partnerships with their local schools to develop and deliver a programme of activity to prevent violence against women and girls. All the project workers developed strong relationships with a school lead who became a champion for the prevention of violence against women and girls work. Together the school lead and the project worker enabled the delivery of lessons in the school, dedicated time for staff training and worked closely with the school lead to start to embed prevention within the school institution.

External experts offer a unique and needed expertise to the school. The project workers were able to tailor their delivery to the needs of the school and support the school lead to develop the commitment to prevention across the institution. From the interviews prior to the commencement of work in the schools, school leads were already dedicated to the idea of preventing violence against women and girls, but it was only with the project leads' support that they were able to put their commitment into practice. It was clear from the interviews with the lead teachers in the schools that they valued this support. The key to the partnerships appeared to be tailoring a programme of work to meet the specific needs of the school and together supporting each other to keep the momentum of the developing project going.

*...It's important to have someone there who, it's almost like a partner and a consultant, and schools are very busy and there's lots and lots of pressures and there's lots and lots of issues and it's really important to have that kind of link with an organisation ... because although we are very passionate about it, it can sort of start to peter off because they'll be other things that we're being asked to do... we just need to have that sort of friend who helps us to keep it as something sort of live in the school (teacher).*

The project leads were the instigators of the development and delivery of work within the school, they drove it forward, often delivering the sessions and the training. It takes time, persuasion and commitment to engage a school, when delivering short-term funded projects there is always a risk that the work will not get embedded. Lack of resources and funding for external experts to be an active partner to the school mean that the project can be prevented from continuing.

*...[the external organisation lead was] the driving force behind the group and that will need to continue for it to be sustainable. It all boils down to time and capacity of staff that are already stretched to the limit (PSHE lead).*

Engaging with schools and local authorities to embed the project beyond a particular cycle of funding is another important way to develop active partnerships. For instance, after the initial funding finished for one of the organisations, they worked to engage with the local authority by presenting the project to the Director of Safeguarding and local councillors, focusing on the content, cost and benefits of the project to staff and students. The organisation also promoted the project to individual schools and local families, highlighting the support for the work from the national PSHE Association, the ways the project met Ofsted's spiritual, moral, social, and cultural criteria and the PSHE curriculum learning concepts. The provision of local domestic violence data was also important when trying to convince potential new funders and stakeholders. A clear pricing strategy of the various series an organisation can offer, also makes it easier for schools and local authorities to budget for such work.

#### **FOR EXAMPLE**

Victim Support Cornwall's SAFE Project had previously-developed, strong links with local schools who have continued to commit to part-funding the project workers to continue their work. The project workers were well known across the school offering support for child protection disclosures and delivering a large number of PSHE lessons. One school that they worked in received an OfSTED outstanding score, and the project workers were commended for their contribution. As a result of the close relationship that they had built up over the years, this particular school offered to fund the project to continue the delivery of violence against women and girls work across the PSHE curriculum. The organisation is also in discussions to create a Cluster Fund to work with the feeder primary schools. The good practice of the project was recognised by participating school who, in turn, dedicated their own resources to the partnership.

### **5.3 Training**

All teachers and school staff need to attend training on violence against women and girls. This will enhance their understanding of the issues, increase their awareness and help to give them the confidence needed to deliver work within the classroom. Young people in focus groups reported that they wanted to be taught by adults that were trained and familiar with the content such as an external expert, a visiting guest speaker or facilitator, or a trained member of staff. One young man called for staff to be trained in the issue and in the facilitation of sessions.

*Because [young people are] not just going to listen to a friend, they'd rather listen to someone that's got training or got something, like coming in and doing something physical with like a play and stuff. That'll actually make an impact to them rather than someone just coming up to them like a friend and saying, 'Domestic violence, it is blah, blah, blah,' because they're not going to listen to that, but if it's taking some time to actually talk to them and raise their awareness of the situation, and obviously different types of situations then they'll be able to understand it more (young man in a single-sex focus group).*

Teacher training can be delivered to raise the awareness of violence against women and girls with all staff in the school. The training aims to ensure that staff are able to observe and understand incidences of violence and to identify warning signs. In the projects where the training was also supported by the sharing of teacher resources this seemed to further increase the confidence and ability of teachers to actively engage in the prevention of violence work. Off The Record (one of the participating organisations) delivered training to staff and provided them with a teachers' resource

developed by a group of local young people. The school lead for the project reported a change in the awareness of staff and an increase in their confidence to deliver work within the school.

*The teacher training [Off The Record did] as well has helped teachers to become more aware and the resources are good as they are happy to use them (lead teacher in one of the participating schools).*

Specific training also needs to be delivered to staff that have a focused responsibility for child protection within the school. Tender (another one of the participating organisations) delivered tailored training to a smaller group of staff in one school which appeared to increase staff's understanding of child protection and raise their confidence to support and protect the needs of young women in the school. As the school lead reported,

*Everyone needs to know the basic policies and procedures but other staff who you know get much more involved around protecting young women in their relationships need to have that greater understanding which can be done through these kinds of workshops that we did last year (lead teacher in one of the participating schools).*

Teachers can also be trained through co-delivering the lessons with the external partner. This will demonstrate to students that a teacher has built up their knowledge and understanding of the issue. This should, in turn, increase the confidence, trust and respect that the young people have in that teacher when it comes to discussing issues of violence against women and girls.

*So like you'd be able to trust them and stuff because they've been in the lessons like with you and stuff, so like the teachers have been educated properly and would be there to help you if you needed them (young woman).*

Victim Support Cornwall (the SAFE project) invited one governor from each school to sit in on a lesson delivered by the project team. This further embedded the school's support for the project and developed the governors' knowledge and understanding. One governor who attended a Year 10 session on sexual bullying concluded that,

*The SAFE project is productive and informative, not only to the pupils but to the staff and leaders running the sessions, as the feedback is hugely positive and the project prompts discussion which is healthy and indeed helpful to a pupil who can then be made to feel totally at ease on speaking about such sensitive issues (school governor).*

#### **FOR EXAMPLE:**

Nottingham Domestic Violence Project trained and engaged teachers across the school, developing their understanding, awareness and skills in the prevention of violence against women and girls. The project worker delivered training workshops with the teaching staff to develop their understanding on violence against women and girls, co-delivered sessions to build the staff's facilitation skills and it also backed up the messages from the training with a campaign across the school with media messages, big events, posters and promotion. The evaluation of the project found that 88% of the teachers reported their knowledge of violence against women and girls was either good or very good up from 46% at the start of the project. (NDVP Evaluation)

## 5.4 Making it relevant

The projects all operated in very different environments so it was vital to understand the local context of violence against women and girls (what the priorities might be and specific issues to take into consideration) and ensure that each school's programme of work felt relevant to the school and the wider community.



Children with learning disabilities are even more in need of violence against women and girls prevention work due to their added vulnerability – not just to experiencing possible violent relationships in the future, but also if past trauma has impaired their cognitive and interpersonal skills. Respond (one of the participating organisations) work specifically with children with learning disabilities who have experienced abuse or trauma, as well as those who have abused others. They are primarily a psychotherapy organisation but developed a harm prevention programme specifically for this project (which has now become a core part of their future work). This learning experience has enabled the project staff to develop specific activities for working with this particular cohort of young people on these issues, but also led to the development of a necessarily different approach to evaluating the work as the outcomes are different and the doing research with this group of young people requires different tools.

Southall Black Sisters work within schools with a high proportion of Black, other minority ethnic and particularly Asian students. Part of their work focused on the prevention of forced marriage. They experienced some resistance to the project from the staff within one school. Therefore Southall Black Sisters worked to engage the parents in the school to try and overcome this resistance. The organisation provided an information and advice stall on the project at a Year 9 parents' evening and facilitated two parent workshops: one for Somali parents and another more generic parents group.

Violence against women and girls is present in all cultures. A Head teacher at one school thought there is a clear need for the work to be more sustained and embedded, but also commented that it would take a generation to make any changes.

*Boys see this work as a threat against their ethnic culture. You can probably get them to agree that violence against women, that their attitude against women is wrong. But when you talk to them about changing, they'll take it as changing their culture. And that's difficult because it is hard to separate the two. And it can get even worse because then it gets on to threatening their religion, so it's a very hard line to walk down to get to just to separate that issue (senior leadership team member).*

*I enjoyed learning about culture and violence against women and hadn't really thought about it as a crime before, just their beliefs or religion (young woman).*

It is a difficult line to tread - delivering a relevant project and ensuring that the perceived and very real challenges of delivering work with groups of young people with 'special needs' or from diverse 'cultures' are to be adequately engaged with. Staff at Respond noted that having a learning disability did not shield these young people from holding stereotypical attitudes and behaviours regarding rigid gender roles. The challenge, therefore, for the project staff was to how to approach these attitudes constructively, in a way that was engaging while at the same time challenging of attitudes that perpetuate violence against women and girls.

Southall Black Sisters and Respond both delivered projects that were tailored to the specific needs of the community that they were working within. They found that because of the detailed focus needed to work with a small group of young people or to focus on a specific form of violence - in Southall Black Sisters' case forced marriage - it was difficult to expand this to a wider whole school approach within the time and resources available in the school and the external funding stream.

#### **FOR EXAMPLE**

Respond worked with 55 young people, chosen by the four schools recruited to the project, who had a range of learning disabilities, with some also having additional physical disabilities. A variety of themes were explored during the work, including: gender roles; what violence is and its impacts; dealing with



conflict, feelings and un/healthy relationships. It was necessary to develop a range of techniques for approaching these issues that were developmentally appropriate. These comprised of visualisation, role plays, art, photo cards for discussion, movement and film. Following the sessions (interventions were usually between 5-8 sessions), attitude questionnaires collected in the first school found that all young people showed some level of understanding about the connection between gender and violence. For instance, all the participants answered true to the statement 'domestic violence happens more to women than to men'.

The project found that many of the young people had quite a basic understanding of gender roles and relationships. One teacher stated that the media plays a role in this making it 'cool and trendy to treat a girl bad'. Because of this, it was felt that more time was needed to lay down the framework around appropriate attitudes towards gender before issues around abuse and violence could be covered. It was also necessary to develop exercises that channelled the young people's focus and creativity. In this respect, the fact that the project staff were trained art and drama therapists and used to working creatively was very helpful. The project workers were able to understand that some young people with learning difficulties find it hard to use their imagination and engage in feeling empathy. It was also important to work with small numbers of young people and to have a good staff-to-student ratios. One teacher commented that the work had an impact on the young women: 'it gave them a kick up the bum! It made them realise it isn't OK and I can do something about it, I can say – 'NO, I don't like that'.

*Pointers from Respond for making it relevant to young people with learning disabilities*

- Non-verbal methods were useful and allowed young people to contribute, conceptualise and increase awareness and feelings or empathy. Using a combination of methods and short activities ensured attention and focus was maintained.
- Using things that happened in the group (i.e. a boy calling another boy a 'girl' as an insult) lead to discussions which sought to link these incidents with the issues at hand, thus making them more real to participants.
- Smaller more quantifiable outcomes were found to be more useful and achievable.

## 5.5 Using stories

Drama can be used in a variety of ways to facilitate young people exploring a complex and sensitive subject. Two of the projects included the use of drama to explore scenarios of teenage relationship abuse, domestic violence and forced marriage. Tender's approach to this work is focused around working with a small group of young people in a school to develop a drama production.

Drama can be an effective method to encourage young people's development of empathy and understanding. A young woman in one school particularly remembered:

*The role play because it helped by making us understand how people treat others and then how other people feel about it (young woman).*

Another project (Nottingham Domestic Violence Forum) invited a theatre company to perform a production about domestic and dating violence to the class. This gave young people the opportunity to explore a story of a violent relationship and to understand it from different perspectives. The young people reported a greater awareness of domestic violence, an empathy with the survivor and a belief that they had increased skills to stop it.

*...You're kind of like putting yourself in their shoes. Even though you are acting, you are acting the part of someone that's being abused and you have to kind of think and feel the way they feel (young man).*

*Acting as the bully, it can teach you a lesson and maybe you ... because sometimes, most of the time, bullies have always been bullied in their lives. Or they've had something that's gone wrong (young woman).*

*You really need students to stop into other people's shoes to understand and not be dismissive of girls who are being abused by men (teacher).*

#### FOR EXAMPLE

Tender developed a six-week intensive drama piece with a small group of young people. This was usually linked into the BTEC or the GCSE curriculum and the final production was shown across the school. The drama students had an opportunity to develop a good understanding of the issue and at the same time build their skills in drama and aspire to getting a good assessment for this piece of work. Teachers reported improved grades as a result of the production for all the young people involved. Young people reported that the opportunity to develop an in-depth work programme was more effective on their learning understanding and engagement of the issue than a few independent classroom sessions might have been. They argued it had built their knowledge and skills up enough to facilitate a change in their behaviour. Some believed they were currently practicing what they had learnt through promoting respectful relationships, noticing abusive conduct and challenging it.

*After we did the workshops with the whole year, I didn't think about it much to be honest, but we had only done it twice with Tender then. When they came in to our drama group week after week and we started to learn more, I think we did talk about what we were learning more between ourselves. We talked a lot about how this relates to our work. (young woman).*

### 5.6 Statistics, law and facts

Giving young people clarity on what the law and facts around violence against women and girls are a very important ways to communicate the serious nature of the violence and to engage young people. It was clear from all the focus groups that there is a lack of understanding of the legal framework guiding violence against women and girls. Nottingham Domestic Violence Project delivered lessons on sexting, and while a young woman reported that her knowledge had increased, she still 'didn't know [if] it [sexting] was against the law'.

Young men, in particular, seemed to remember statistics used in the sessions they had been involved in. This appeared to provide a useful starting point for the young men to then think about the impact of violence against women and girls, how it might feel and so forth.

*Because I was, I was really surprised at some of the numbers that they told us about, like three women a week [are killed by a partner], I thought that was wow, really, that's, I do not believe that. And I was surprised to see how like they acted in, when they did the roles (young man).*

*I remember being surprised by statistics as to how many cases like this had happened in the UK. It was far bigger than I thought it would be (young man).*

#### FOR EXAMPLE

Off the Record developed a classroom activity on the law and facts about violence against women and girls. They created a quiz to test students' understandings of domestic violence.

Sample of questions from the Domestic Violence Quiz include:

1. How many women will experience domestic violence/abuse in their lifetime?

- a. 1 in 4
- b. 1 in 10
- c. 1 in 25

*Council of Europe, 2002 ([www.coe.int](http://www.coe.int))*

3. How many times on average will a woman be assaulted before she reports it to the police?

- a. Twice
- b. 10 times
- c. 35 times

*Yearnshire S: Analysis of Cohort, in Bewley S, Friend J and Mezey G (Eds), Violence Against Women, London, RCOG, 1997.*

4. Domestic abuse/violence occurs in same gender relationships

- a. The same incidence as heterosexual women
- b. More frequently than heterosexual women
- c. Less frequently than heterosexual women.

*Home Office Safety and Justice consultative document, 2003.*

8. In homes where children live, what proportion of domestic abuse takes place when children are in the same or the next room?

- a. 50%
- b. 75%
- c. 90%

*NSPCC 2006*

**Answers 1 a, 3 c, 4 a, 8 c**

## 5.7 Young people lead

Young people can lead change in their own lives, relationships, institutions, communities and nations. With the right guidance and training they can gain a deep understanding and engagement with stopping violence against women and girls, which can often lead to the development of creative and effective actions to stop it. As one teacher noted in a school where Off the Record had worked closely with young people to lead the project,

*The students who have been involved, they are the voice that has made it happen so I think other schools could learn a lot about their involvement and the empowerment it brings (senior leadership team member).*

The development of peer mentoring schemes (by Tender for instance) where young people were trained to be relationship advisors and mentors or other broader peer education projects showed that for the young people involved, they gained greatly from this and reported being able to help their friends and recognise abusive situations.

Young people have a unique voice within their communities and in some schools, where perhaps at the beginning of the project some school staff were a little resistant or disengaged, young people's active involvement in pushing the agenda forward appeared crucial in winning such members of the staff

team over. In some schools, young people appeared to become passionate advocates for stopping the violence and led internal school campaigns to raise awareness of the issue and demand actions from their teachers. Young people talking about violence against women and girls legitimised the issue through showing that it was something that they wanted to learn about and that it was important and relevant to their lives. They created a shared language and understanding for school staff and students.

*It's student ownership, discussing it in different way. I have found that if a teacher talks quite a few will listen, if a student talks everyone will listen, you notice that in assembly.(senior leadership team member).*

### FOR EXAMPLE

Southall Black Sisters recruited young people to act as ambassadors on violence against women and girls work within their schools. As part of the first phase of the programme 18 Ambassadors were trained and supported to organise a whole-school event for the International Day to End Violence Against Women. The group organised a lunchtime whole-school event for Years 7, 8, 9 and 10, selling cakes, white ribbons and distributing information leaflets. In addition, the Ambassadors chose to campaign and raise awareness of forced marriage and honour-based violence through the death of Shafiea Ahmed utilising display boards and posters that they had created. During the second phase of the work, 10 Ambassadors were then trained to support the delivery of the PSHE Year 9 sessions with teachers. During the sessions, Ambassadors supported their fellow peers in undertaking the classroom activities. The Ambassadors were also used to pilot and design some of the activities within the education resource pack developed by Southall Black Sister around doing violence against women and girls work in schools with large populations of black and minority ethnic communities. In total 12 one-and-a-half hour training sessions were conducted with students enrolled on the Peer Ambassador programme.

## 5.8 Achieving through the curriculum

*Most curriculum areas could address the issue of healthy relationships. It should be embedded in people's understanding and practice. For example, you could look at healthy relationships through the lens of literature, history. In Maths you could look at the stats on domestic violence (senior leadership team member).*

All of the projects delivered a focus on violence against women and girls through some element of curriculum within the school. Across the projects, content was delivered within the PSHE, Geography, English, Drama and PE curriculum areas. Despite project leads attempts to engage with subjects across the curriculum, PSHE was still the most common focus for this work. Delivery in any area of the curriculum was always challenged by the timetable squeeze that meant that more academic or results-based subjects took priority across the school. Some schools did recognise the importance of making time in the curriculum for this work:

*The curriculum has had major changes to it, as we've taken on board that these issues have to be dealt with within the curriculum. Specifically within Humanities, there have been developments there (senior leadership team member).*

Academies have increased autonomy to decide how and what to deliver within their curriculum, therefore if the subject is seen as an education priority the Academy will find opportunities to deliver it. In one Academy participating in the programme, violence against women and girls was recognised as an important issue to work on and therefore content was streamed across the school in what they

called their ‘business communities’. This meant that all young people had four hours a week on life skills that included violence against women and girls work.

*The academy works on a slightly different curriculum because we have got the flexibility to create what’s needed in this area and one of the things we’ve done is a thing called business community time... life skills time (senior leadership team member).*

Nottingham Domestic Violence Project delivered the lessons in this Academy and felt such an opportunity gave young people the time they needed to engage with, and understand violence against women and girls. Young people reported that they remembered the content of lessons more than the content of big whole-school events (for the latter remembering the process or form of delivery, but not the meaning behind it). Ideally, content engaged with during lessons would be further emended through messages being disseminated via whole-school campaigns.

*In terms of actual impact on learning and behaviour, the curriculum lessons seem to be the most effective (teacher).*

### FOR EXAMPLE

Victim Support Cornwall were unique in that they had built up existing relationships with the two schools who took part in the programme - having worked with them previously on their SAFE domestic violence prevention work programme. In the first year of the project, lessons were delivered to a total of eighteen Year 7 classes, a number of Year 9 classes and nineteen Year 10 classes. In the second year of the project classes were delivered to sixteen classes across Year 8 and twenty-one in Year 10. Additionally, sixteen classes of Year 11 students received two one-hour lessons. This meant that some students participated in sessions on violence against women and girls for two consecutive years, arguably delivering a sustained programme of work with the young people and building their knowledge and understanding of violence against women and girls year-on-year. This regular delivery also helped the project embed the work into the schools’ PSHE curriculum for the future.

**Table 2 – lesson plans for the different Year groups in one school in one year.**

<b>Year 7</b>	
Week 1	Respect within families, between friends and at school
Week 2	What difference does gender make?
Week 3	Exploring the qualities of good relationships
Week 4	Bullying and sexual bullying
Week 5	From by-standing to standing by
Week 6	Personal charter for respect
<b>Year 8</b>	
Week 1	Revisiting personal charter for respect
Week 2	It’s ok to say ‘no’ and it’s okay to be different
Week 3	Halos and horns
Week 4	Sexual bullying
Week 5	Gender equality/non-discrimination
Week 6	Keeping yourself safe

<b>Year 9</b>	
Week 1	Healthy and unhealthy relationships. Sources of support
Week 2	What is domestic abuse? Why does the victim stay?
Week 3	Case study
Week 4	An unhealthy relationship – recognising the signs
Week 5	Friends. Quiz
<b>Year 10</b>	
Week 1	Violence against Women and Girls
Week 2	Why do men abuse women more than women abuse men? Are women still stereotyped and sexualised today? Can this lead to acts of violence against them?
Week 3	Sexual bullying
Week 4	Rape
Week 5	Forms of VAWG which affect particular communities and cultures
Week 6	Final round-up

### 5.9 Interactive and safe facilitation

All of the projects used experiential learning of the subject to engage with the content in a way that is meaningful to the individual. The project workers were all skilled facilitators who actively engaged the young people in a sensitive and challenging topic. For example, Victim Support Cornwall created images of warning signs of teenage relationship abuse and they hung these on a washing line across the class room and asked the students to peg the warning signs up on a continuum from harmless to harmful.

Young people wanted the facilitators to understand the content, set clear ground rules and model respect. The atmosphere within the classroom was very important to the facilitation and the communication of the messages. Off The Record worked in a special needs school where it was very rare to actually deliver group work. The project worker managed to facilitate sessions where young people did interact and express their opinions. She built up trust across the group, developing an understanding of the young people and pitching the materials at their ability level.

Off The Record also worked with a Youth Involvement Group in a mainstream school to create and write an education curriculum on violence against women and girls. The young people reviewed and developed teaching resources for Years 8,9 and 10. They were trained in the content and then looked through resources to identify lessons that they considered to be good practice for learning about violence against women and girls. They wanted the resource pack to cover domestic violence, relationships, sexualisation, and gender. All activities use interactive methods and discussion. All teachers in the participating schools ranked the final resource pack as 'a highly effective resource'.

*PSHE lessons are a lot more interactive than they used to be. So that's helped us to learn a lot more information on how people can be abused and we are able to give our opinions lot more than we could before (young man).*

**FOR EXAMPLE** (taken directly from Respond's internal evaluation report of the project)

The project workers created a story about two young people, Peter and Mary, who were step brother and sister and in conflict. They also developed a motif of a butterfly, used in the story to represent a comforting feeling for Mary and also a time to think about what to do in difficult situations. Pupils were given a butterfly template to colour in and the results were photographed and celebrated. Using the butterfly motif allowed for some exploration of feelings and experiences of sibling and other conflict amongst young people, some of whom had resisted such discussions in previous weeks. This technique enabled young people to share and reflect on very personal experiences and listen to each other. They were also able to reflect on themes of gender roles and inequality and unfairness portrayed in the story.

## 5.10 Make some noise

Nottingham Domestic Violence Forum and Off The Record used posters to raise awareness of violence against women and girls across the school. Young people felt this led to more open conversations about what to accept and not accept in a relationship. Both projects worked with young people to create the posters. It is important for there to be a school-developed understanding of violence against women and girls and for that to come from the voice and experience of students in the school.

*So it's developed more of a shared understanding of what it is and that's evident in some of the posters that the students have got displayed around the building that they've produced themselves, that it's not messages that are coming in from outside the school now but actually it's been developed with the students from within the school, and that's how you change a school culture is actually working with the students and young people instead of imposing it on them ... (senior leadership team member).*

Young people in focus groups at the end of the programme reported a good recall of campaign events, remembering the key campaign messages. One young woman talked about the impact that the campaign was still having within the school and that,

*A lot of people are still wearing them [the white ribbons] now as well, in the Assembly a few weeks ago when we let all the balloons off a lot of people were still wearing their white ribbons and loads of people have been wearing them now on t-shirts and stuff, so it gets the message about (young woman).*

## **FOR EXAMPLE**

A part of the Nottinghamshire Domestic Violence Forum programme of work, they used the international campaign - White Ribbon - a key tool for highlighting violence against women and girls issues and to emphasize the responsibility of men and boys in helping to end the abuse. The campaign encourages schools to feel part of something larger. As an internationally-recognised day, the campaign has a focal point and one school won an award for meeting internationally-set White Ribbon campaign criteria. This made many members of the school community feel very proud about their achievement.

Two hundred Year 7 and 8 students were involved, along with 30 staff, and they had to form a people white ribbon, which was filmed and photographed. The large photographic version of the ribbon was then placed on a notice board in the hall where students had lunch and also parents' evenings were held. A short film was created about the event, that was played on a loop on the school TVs. Furthermore, a Community TV channel was contacted and agreed to play the film clip nine times a day over the campaign period. The event led the school to be awarded the Silver White Ribbon Award - the



first school in the country to receive this certificate. See the film:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GnLLPCFCi2M>

### 5.11 Sustained drop feed

A comprehensive programme of delivery is necessary to embed and enhance the prevention of violence against women and girls across the school. The project leads all attempted to develop a whole-school approach that worked with young people, staff, and across the institution. Different opportunities were used to develop the learning of young people and raise awareness of violence against women and girls across the schools. Across the programmes two key elements of success have been identified as creating a sustained drop feed of work across the school. These are:

- The embedding of work within curriculum areas, which is revisited across the years and
- Actively demonstrating the priority of prevention work across the school.

*Good school development, I believe, comes from sustained drop feed education in the area or areas of the curriculum. It reaches every child and has a progression to it (lead teacher in one of the participating schools).*

Projects that did take the whole-school approach, moving beyond the classroom, managed to raise the profile of the prevention work by backing up the messages received during classroom work, with posters, campaigns and Assemblies. This is also more likely to ensure clear and consistent messages are given to young people in relation to challenging incidences of violence against women and girls. Respond project workers found that when there was consistency in the discussions between them and the school, working relationships and the ability to see change in the young people who joined in in the programme of work were improved. Behaviour tended to be better within the group sessions and, vitally, staff were more likely to reinforce the learning beyond the project.

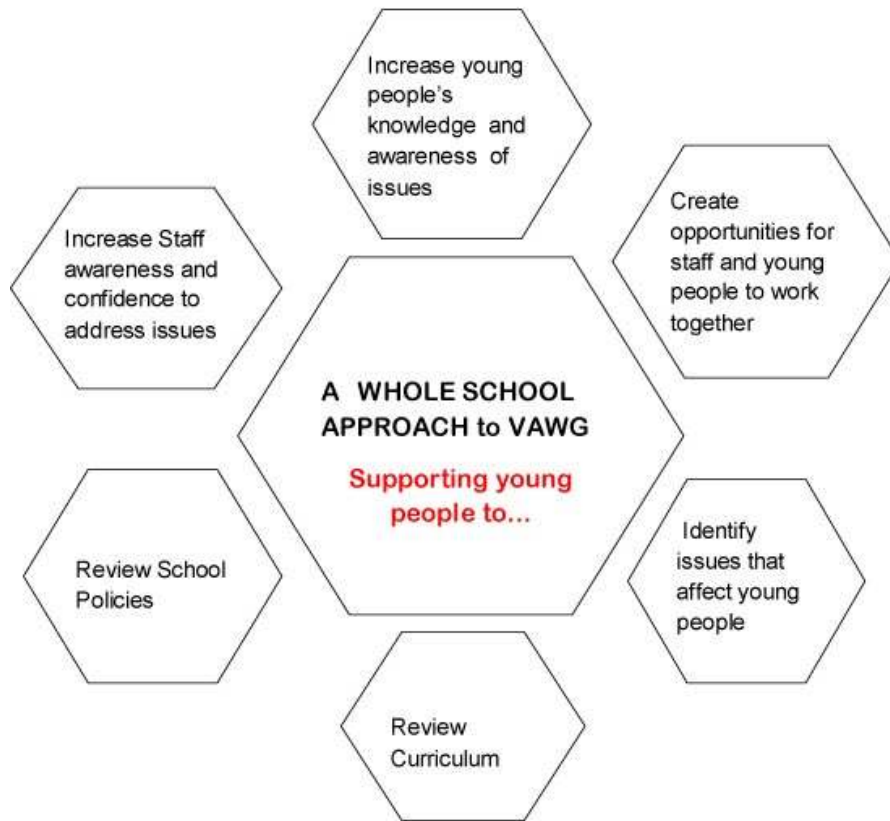
#### FOR EXAMPLE

Off the Record created a Youth Involvement Group who worked with the project lead to develop and deliver a comprehensive programme across their school. The Youth Involvement Group began by working intensively to understand violence against women and girls and to audit good practice education resources. They then wrote an education resource pack to be used within their own school that had clear session plans and guidance. Then they created and used a Safe and Equal Gauge to identify the local issues in relation to violence against women and girls. They also ran an interactive voting lunchtime session that engaged the whole school and resulted in sexual bullying being identified as the priority area that the group should work on. The students worked with the project lead to train teachers in sexual bullying and delivered PSHE lessons on this issue.

The Youth Involvement Group were felt to have created institutional change by amending the current school policy on sexual bullying and through meeting with the Head teacher to discuss actions that the school could take on this issue. This resulted in the Head teacher prioritising and pushing forward the project across the school.

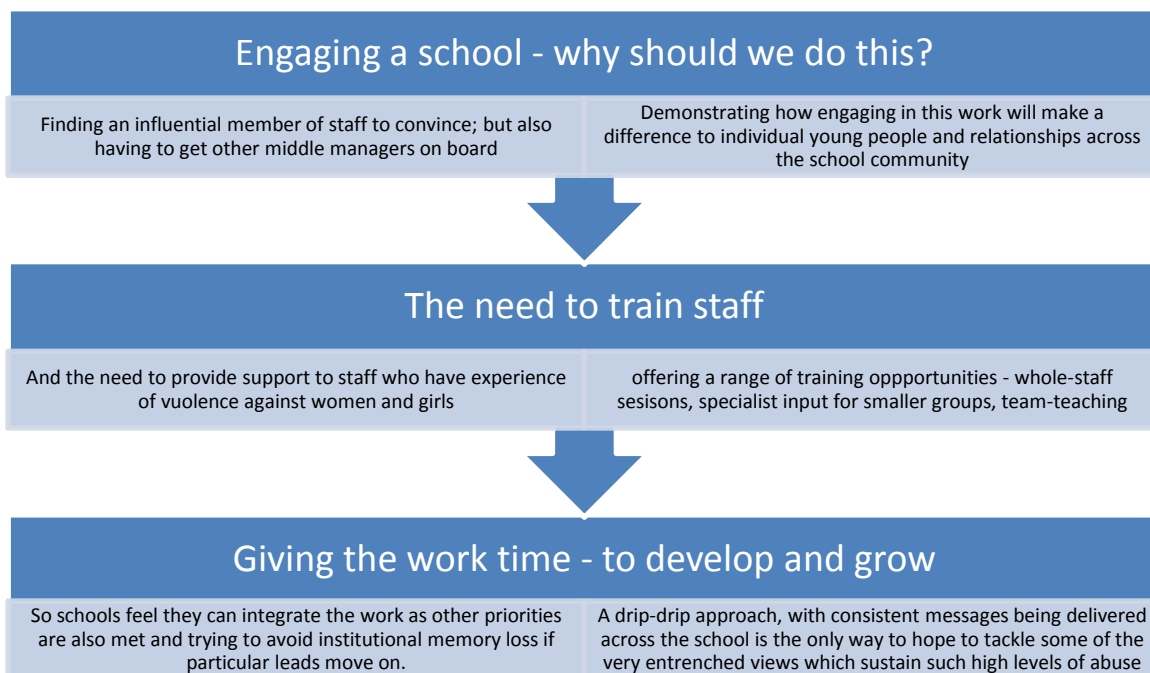
*The group have been active in being part of changing our bullying policy and this has had a massive impact on the school, the students feel strongly about something and they make it happen and we have to listen. This is a new cultural shift as we learn more about young people's involvement and leadership (PSHE Lead).*

Figure 5 – Off The Record’s whole-school approach prioritising the involvement of young people in leading change across the school.



## 6 OVERCOMING THE CHALLENGES TO THIS WORK

Figure 6 – key challenges experienced during this programme



**A key area which most organisations struggled to develop was an engagement with parents and the wider community.**

## 7 RECOMMENDATIONS

The 'Expert Group Meeting on Prevention of Violence against Women and Girls' in 2012<sup>4</sup> noted the critical role of government to create an 'enabling environment' through 'undertaking policy, legislative and budgetary reform to promote gender equality and women's empowerment, and actively address the multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and disadvantage that place women and girls at risk of violence'.

Our research echoes this critical recommendation as well as some more individual recommendations for specific groups. This list is by no means exhaustive but offer some guidelines for action in responding to violence against women and girls.

### 7.1 Schools

*'I think VAWG should be taught earlier, because it instils it at a young age and they can take it through high school and know what to do if it happens to them.'*

- Recognise the issue through gaining an understanding of how it impacts on young people, staff and the wider community;
- Nominated staff for child protection have violence against women policy and practice responsibilities included in their remit;
- Ensure child protection policies recognise violence against women as a child protection issue;
- Ensure sexual bullying is included within school bullying policy and is effectively challenged;
- Organise a meeting with local women's organisations and discuss possible partnership working;
- Discuss the issues at school council meetings, board of governors and staff and senior management meetings;
- Ensure VAWG is taught as part of the curriculum, including PSHE, SRE and citizenship. Also think about other opportunities across the curriculum to look at these issues (for example using VAWG statistics in Maths lessons);
- Regularly collect data on all forms of violence against women and girls, including sexual harassment and bullying;
- Appoint 'violence against women and girls' or 'gender equality' champions in the staff team and also in the student body. Peer educators can be a fantastic way to champion this issue in an empowering and relevant way;

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.unwomen.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Report-of-the-EGM-on-Prevention-of-Violence-against-Women-and-Girls.pdf>

- Look at the AVA website for signposting and advice of how to take this forward. We will be producing a toolkit with Comic Relief which will be a practical guide for how to take this work forward ([www.avaproject.org.uk](http://www.avaproject.org.uk));
- Recognise that you will get better outcomes for young people if you take a whole school approach to challenging violence against women and girls;
- Ensure leaflets, posters and support information is clearly displayed;
- Look at our minimum standards – [http://www.avaproject.org.uk/our-resources/good-practice-guidance--toolkits/prevention-guidelines-for-schools-\(2009\).aspx](http://www.avaproject.org.uk/our-resources/good-practice-guidance--toolkits/prevention-guidelines-for-schools-(2009).aspx) These will also be updated in our forthcoming toolkit;
- Read the Home Office guide for teachers on teenage relationship abuse <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/crime/teen-relationship-abuse/teen-abuse-teachers-guide>

## 7.2 Parents

It is vital that parents are included in any work done in schools in order to back up and support the key messages found in this report.

One of the young women that we interviewed said that she had heard about violence against women and girls from her parents and she said *'it would have more of an effect on me if I heard it from someone I care about and that cares about me.'*

- Raise this issue at PTA meetings;
- Ensure support information is clearly displayed for any parents that may need support themselves or who may be concerned about their children's relationships;
- Read the Home Office leaflet for parents and carers: <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/crime/teen-relationship-abuse/teen-abuse-teachers-guide>
- Use the template letters from the EAW Schools Safe 4 Girls campaign to find out how your children's schools currently respond to VAWG: <http://www.endviolenceagainstwomen.org.uk/education>
- Tell Ofsted, the schools inspectorate, what you think about your child's school through <http://parentview.ofsted.gov.uk/>

## 7.3 Voluntary organisations

- Use the evidence in this report to create a briefing for local schools/pupil referral units;
- Use the Home Office teen relationship abuse website as a resource when working with young people who are or could be in abusive relationships: <http://thisisabuse.direct.gov.uk/>
- Familiarise yourself with the government's action plan on violence against women: <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/crime/violence-against-women-girls/>
- Ensure that you are prepared for the forthcoming amendment to the domestic violence definition which will come into force in March 2013. Consult the preparedness tool due to be launched by the

Home Office and AVA in March 2013 for guidance about the potential impacts of amending the definition to include 16 and 17 year olds;

- Explore potential ways for effective local multi-agency working and information sharing;
- Make sure you know where you could refer a young victim of relationship abuse to locally.
- Lobby your local authority! Use the EAW Schools Safe 4 Girls template letter to ask your local authority to make prevention and work in schools a core part of a local violence against women strategy <http://www.endviolenceagainstwomen.org.uk/education>
- Speak out! Work with other local women's groups, schools or the local authority to organise a public event to discuss how these issues can be addressed locally. Use the EAW Schools Safe 4 Girls template letter to write to your local media and use #schoolssafe4girls to discuss these issues on Twitter and other social media <http://www.endviolenceagainstwomen.org.uk/education>

#### 7.4 Local Areas

- Develop local VAWG strategies with prevention a key priority;
- Fund local women's services to support victims/survivors and to deliver projects in schools;
- Ensure this is a priority issue for health and wellbeing boards;
- Offer training to all relevant practitioners in the area.

*'It's a global issue. More people need to learn about it. If more people find out, hopefully it will stop.  
We're all depending on that'*

#### 7.5 National government

*'Instead of wasting our tax money on fireworks for New Years and stuff, why doesn't he (the prime minister) just fund organisations to come into schools and help children?'*

- Ensure cross government and cross party commitment to the prevention of violence against women and girls;
- Ensure national guidance is provided on assessing the risks to young people and that all practitioners are trained appropriately;
- Work with the women's sector to develop a long-term programme of work to prevent violence against women and girls;
- Provide national guidance on the forthcoming amendment to the definition of domestic violence;
- Show clear leadership about men's role in ending VAWG;
- Tackle sexism, sexualisation and violence against women and girls in the media (including social media, online and traditional media).

*'It's going to carry on happening, so future generations need to know. Otherwise history will repeat itself over and over again'.*

## 7.6 Home office

- Continue to invest in on going public awareness campaigns;
- Ensure that any campaigns are representative and reflective of the diverse nature of violence against women;
- Link campaigns to schools work with appropriate guidance;
- Show clear leadership about men's role in ending VAWG.

*'I think the campaign should be spread to more schools because I don't know I think if every year and stuff had a lot of this, classes and something it would be like a more talked about subject and a lot, like everyone will know who to talk to and everything.'*

## 7.7 Department for Education

*'You need them to invest in something that's like long-term for the next generation to something to just basically make it easier for them to understand domestic violence. They need to know about it.'*

- Make it a legal obligation for schools to address these issues through Sex and Relationships Education and PSHE;
- Fully commit to relevant actions in the government's action plan on VAWG;
- Re-instate the expert advisory group on VAWG;
- Work with the women's sector to develop a long-term programme of work to prevent violence against women and girls.



