

FROM BOYS TO MEN: STAGE ONE BULLETIN

Young People's Attitudes towards and Experiences of Domestic Violence

Introduction

Researchers from Keele, Manchester and Bath Universities are conducting a research study which is focussed on preventing domestic abuse. This report details the findings of the first part of this study: a survey of school pupils on their attitudes towards and experiences of domestic violence.

WHO TOOK PART IN THE RESEARCH?

- 1203 Year 9 pupils
- Aged 13-14

Method

Participants were asked to fill out an anonymous questionnaire during lesson time. They were asked questions about what they thought about domestic violence in six different situations e.g.:

Do you think it is OK for a man to hit his partner/wife if HE is drunk?

☐ ☐
It's perfectly OK

☐ ☐
It's sort of OK

☐ ☐
It's sort of wrong

☐ ☐
It's really wrong

They were also asked to fill in tables about their own experiences in their dating relationships and what they have witnessed at home e.g.:

- **Think about people you have dated, and past or current boyfriends or girlfriends.
Have THEY...ever pushed slapped or grabbed you?**
- **Think about people you have dated, and past or current boyfriends or girlfriends.
Have YOU...ever pushed slapped or grabbed them?**
- **At any time in your life that you are aware of, has an adult who looks after you...ever
been pushed, slapped or grabbed by their partner?**

RESULTS

Attitudes towards Domestic Violence

Boys were more likely than girls to think it was ok for a man/woman to hit his/her partner.

49% of boys and 33% of girls thought that it was 'ok' for a man/woman to hit his/her partner in at least one of the situations listed in the questionnaire.

Pupils were more likely to think it was 'ok' to hit a partner if:

- He/she had hit their partner first.
- He/she had cheated on their partner.

Experiences of Domestic Violence in Dating Relationships

83% of the young people had been in a dating relationship.

What types of abuse are we talking about?

PHYSICAL ABUSE

- Being pushed, slapped or grabbed.
- Being punched, kicked or choked or beaten up.

SEXUAL COERCION

- Pressured or forced to have sex.
- Pressured or forced to do anything else sexual (kissing, hugging and touching).

EMOTIONAL ABUSE AND CONTROLLING BEHAVIOUR

- Being called nasty names to put you down.
- Being told who you can't speak to.
- Being checked up on who you have phoned or sent messages to.
- Being stopped from seeing friends or family.

52.5% OF YOUNG PEOPLE HAD EXPERIENCED AT LEAST ONE TYPE OF ABUSE, EITHER BECAUSE SOMEONE HAD HURT OR BEEN HURTFUL TO THEM OR AN ADULT WHO CARES FOR THEM IN THIS WAY, OR BECAUSE THEY HAD BEHAVED IN AN ABUSIVE WAY TOWARDS A BOYFRIEND OR GIRLFRIEND THEMSELVES.

Victimisation

45% of young people reported having experienced at least one of the types of domestic abuse listed in the table.

- 38% reported experiencing emotional abuse and controlling behaviours.
- 17% had experienced physical abuse.
- 14% had experienced sexual coercion.
- Half of those who had been victimised had also been abusive.
- Girls reported more sexual victimisation than boys

Self-Reported Behaviours

25% of young people had carried out at least one of the behaviours listed.

- 20% had carried out emotional abuse or controlling behaviours.
- 7% had been physically abusive.
- 4% had carried out sexual coercion.
- The majority of those who had carried out these behaviours also had experience of being victimised in some way.

Witnessing Domestic Violence

34% of young people reported witnessing abuse involving an adult who looks after them.

- Girls reported witnessing more abuse than boys.
- 27% of young people witnessed emotional abuse or controlling behaviour.
- 19% of young people witnessed physical violence.

LOOKING FOR HELP



If they were hit by a boy/girlfriend

- 45% of young people would seek help from an adult.
- BUT girls were twice as likely as boys to seek help.
- Young people were less likely to say they would seek help if they had already been victimised in some way or witnessed abuse at home.
- Girls who had carried out abuse behaviours were also less likely to seek help.

If they saw an adult at home being hit by a partner

- 71% of young people would look for help from an adult.
- That is, they were more likely to look for help for an adult being hit than for help for themselves if they were being hit.
- Young people who had already witnessed abuse at home were less likely to seek help.

EDUCATING YOUNG PEOPLE

We also studied the impact of education with children which aims to prevent domestic violence. We found that:

- Education can change children's attitudes towards violence in relationships so that they are less condoning of violence.
- Education is effective for both boys and girls.
- It is also effective whether children have experienced domestic abuse or not.
- It seems to be much harder to encourage young people to seek help

WHY DOES THIS MATTER?

- Nearly half of young people think that hitting a partner is okay in certain circumstances.
- Domestic abuse is experienced and witnessed by large numbers of young people by age 13-14.
- We need to think of ways to challenge the attitudes of young people who think violence is okay.
- We need to think of ways to help young people who have been victimised or who have witnessed domestic abuse.
- We also need to think of ways to helping young people who have been abusive towards others.
- We need to ask for domestic abuse prevention education to be compulsory in schools.
- This education needs to address children of all age groups in secondary schools.

IF YOU WANT MORE INFORMATION ON THIS RESEARCH PLEASE CONTACT:

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