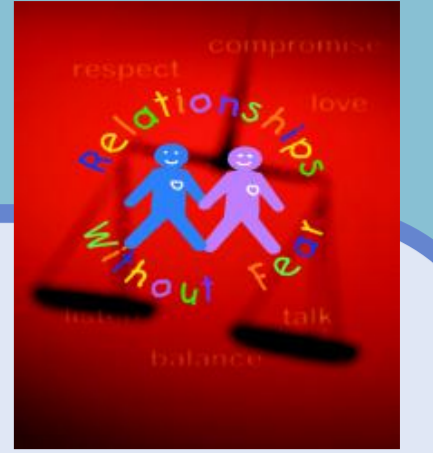


# Is Domestic Abuse Prevention Education Effective?

Claire L. Fox, Mary-Louise Corr, David Gadd, Julius Sim

Email: c.fox@keele.ac.uk



## From Boys to Men Research Study

- The *From Boys to Men Project* explores why some young men become perpetrators of domestic abuse.
- It also seeks to establish what more could be done to reduce the number of young men who become perpetrators.

The study has involved three phases:

1. A survey of 1200 school children (aged 13-14), including an [evaluation of a school-based domestic abuse prevention programme](#).
2. Thirteen focus groups with young people (aged 13-19).
3. Life history interviews with 30 young men (aged 16-20) who have experienced domestic violence as victims, perpetrators and/or witnesses.

## Relationships without Fear

- 6-week Healthy Relationships and Domestic Abuse Prevention Programme in North Staffordshire ([www.archnorthstaffs.org.uk](http://www.archnorthstaffs.org.uk)).
- Delivered in Year 4 – Year 11 over six weeks, one hour each week.
- It looks at how positive relationships can be formed and how children and young people can develop relationships that are free from fear and abuse.
- It aims to give young people the knowledge and skills to enable them to recognise an abusive relationship.
- It also aims to tackle the underlying attitudes that give rise to abusive tendencies.

## Background and Aims

Evidence of high rates of victimisation and perpetration of abuse in teenage relationships (Barter et al., 2009) and acceptance of violence in certain circumstances among young people (Burman & Cartmel, 2005) provides good reason to target preventative intervention at teenagers in early adolescence.

A number of school-based domestic abuse prevention programmes have been developed in the UK but evidence as to the effectiveness of such programmes is limited.

### Aims

- To evaluate the effectiveness of one programme, *Relationships without Fear*, delivered in North Staffordshire.
- To examine whether the outcomes differ by gender and experiences of domestic abuse.

## Method

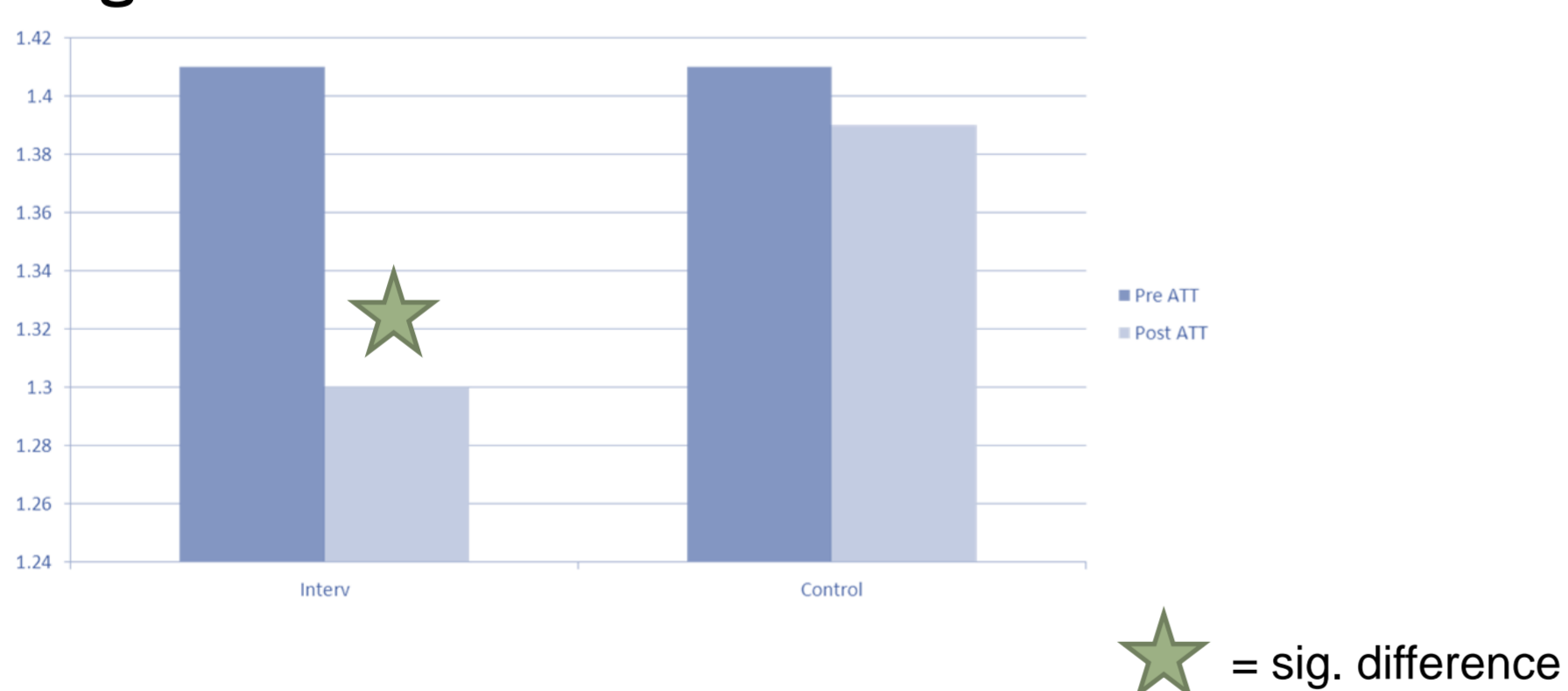
- The *Attitudes towards Domestic Violence (ADV) Questionnaire* was administered to 1203 Year 9 pupils (aged 13-14).
- 12 questions to capture young people's thoughts on how wrong it is for a man to hit a woman and a woman to hit a man in certain conditions e.g.

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

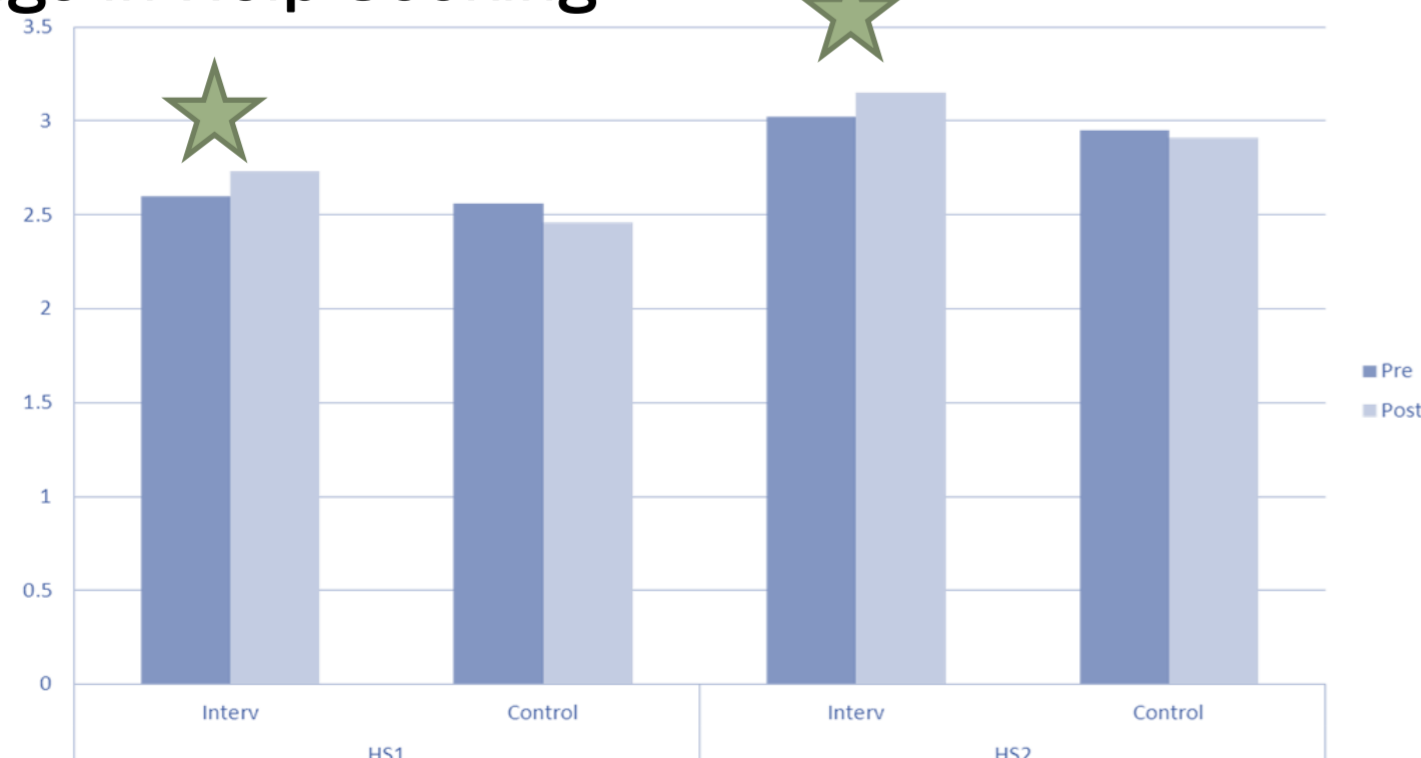
It's perfectly OK [ ] It's sort of OK [ ] It's sort of wrong [ ] It's really wrong [ ]

- Pupils in 7 schools receiving *Relationships without Fear* (intervention schools) took part in the evaluation as well as pupils in 6 schools not yet receiving the programme (control schools).
- Pupils completed the ADV questionnaire at pre and post-test (before and after receiving the programme) and the results from pupils in intervention schools were compared to those in control schools.
- Pupils in intervention schools also completed the ADV after 3 months.
- All pupils responded to questions about experiences of abuse (as victims, perpetrators and witnesses) and help-seeking (if they, or an adult they knew, had been hit by a partner).
- Multi-Level Modelling analyses focussed on the change in young people's attitudes towards domestic abuse from before to after the programme as well as the changes in young people's help-seeking behaviour.

## Change in Attitudes



## Change in Help-Seeking



## Results

- There was significant improvement in the attitudes of those in the intervention group from pre to post-test (compared to the control group).
- Improvement in attitudes was maintained 3 months after the programme finished.
- Improvement was the same for boys and girls (although at both pre and post test boys were more accepting of abuse than girls).
- Improvement did not vary by experiences of domestic abuse.
- Significant improvement in help-seeking also, but this was not maintained after 3 months.

## Conclusions and Implications

- Domestic abuse prevention education in schools is a worthwhile endeavour.
- It can be effective in changing girls' and boys' attitudes towards domestic abuse.

- It can also encourage more young people to seek help.
- Children 'at risk' of becoming domestic abuse perpetrators or victims can still benefit from a wider school-based prevention programme.
- Supports the call for such education to be compulsory.
- Should be delivered in each year of secondary school, particularly to encourage help seeking in the longer term.