

**Domestic violence prevention
work
Guidelines for minimum
standards**

Thangham Debonnaire
Domestic Violence Responses

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Domestic violence prevention work - Guidelines for minimum standards

1. Defining domestic violence

The current resources available for use in domestic violence prevention work base their approach on definitions of domestic violence which have the following features:

1. That domestic violence and abuse is violence and abuse carried out by one adult against another with whom they are or have been in an intimate relationship;
2. That domestic violence and abuse can include physical, sexual, emotional and other forms of harm and controlling behaviour;
3. That the abusive behaviour is intentional and functional;
4. That perpetrators and victims can be male or female and the relationship can be heterosexual, gay or lesbian;
5. Domestic violence includes violence from family members such as elder abuse when committed by a family member or intimate partner
6. That the majority of the perpetrators are heterosexual males and the majority of victims are their female partners and ex-partners and that this is linked to assumptions about gender roles in relationships;
7. Domestic violence also includes forced marriages, so called 'honour' crimes and female genital mutilation.

Any work to prevent domestic violence will benefit from using a clear definition of domestic violence. This helps to inform the choice and sequencing of activities, the knowledge and training needed to carry out the work and the links to other work.

The current Home Office definition is:

'Any incident of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional) between adults who are or have been intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender or sexuality'.

This definition currently only relates to people over 18. It is possible that this definition may change in the near future to lower this age limit to 16.

2. Why is this work important?

- In 90% of family households where domestic violence is occurring, children are in the same or the next room 90% of the time
- 2 women a week in the UK are killed because of domestic violence
- 40% of young people have experienced domestic violence in their own intimate relationships

- 70% of teenage mothers have experienced domestic violence

It is vital that we target children with early intervention and prevention work to challenge attitudes that promote gender based violence and to safeguard women and children.

3. Why should schools and youth projects address this issue?

- Domestic violence can affect children and young people's cognitive and emotional ability
- Schools and youth projects can also be a safe haven for children and young people experiencing violence at home
- Schools and youth projects may be a place of safety for mothers to seek support
- Schools and youth projects have a safeguarding duty to protect the welfare of children
- Schools are legally obliged to promote pupil's moral, spiritual and social development
- Domestic violence is a cross-curricular issue which can be integrated into a range of other issues and subjects such as bullying, emotional literacy, circle time, PSHE, SRE, forced marriage etc

4. Aims of prevention work

The aims should be clear, specific to domestic violence and age appropriate. Examples of suitable aims include:

For young people:

1. To equip young people with understanding of what domestic violence and controlling behaviours are and of unacceptable behaviour in relationships;
2. To develop young people's understanding of how to identify a potential or actual abusive relationship;
3. To provide young people with information about how they could help a friend, colleague, etc now and in the future if they suspected that they were being abused;
4. To help young people to develop their own understanding of what makes a safe, non-abusive relationship;
5. To help young people to develop skills of negotiating fairly within relationships and to experience the positive qualities of co-operating with a partner;
6. To promote gender equality in all intimate relationships.

For younger children

1. To equip children with an understanding of what is meant by a good friend and how to identify someone who is not being a good friend;

2. To help children to develop an understanding of what is and is not acceptable behaviour in a friendship;
3. To help children to develop negotiating and communication skills;
4. To help children to experience the positive aspects of working co-operatively;
5. To promote gender equality in all friendships.

5. Specialist knowledge

It is important that children and young people are given clear and accurate information about domestic violence and that people leading the sessions promote attitudes which do not condone or unintentionally collude with domestic violence and abuse. Whoever has overall responsibility for the sessions should have a thorough understanding of all of the following:

- The nature, scale and extent of domestic violence and of the effects on victims, children and others;
- The ways in which perpetrators deny, minimise and excuse their behaviour and of the ways in which other people can intentionally or unintentionally collude with this;
- The legal context to domestic violence and the range of responses to help to support and protect victims and their children and to hold perpetrators to account;
- The historical context of domestic violence and of the relationship between assumptions about gender roles in relationships and domestic violence;
- The ways in which children and young people can be affected by domestic violence;
- The child protection implications of domestic violence and of carrying out domestic violence prevention work;
- Relevant techniques and approaches to domestic violence prevention work, specific to the age, ability and developmental stages of the children and young people they are working with and skills in using these;
- The role of schools in domestic violence prevention work, of the ways schools work and of the links between domestic violence prevention work and the National Curriculum.

Domestic violence prevention work should always therefore involve or be supported by a domestic violence specialist in some way and should always be led by individuals who have access to and know how to refer to accurate, up to date information about the nature of domestic violence, the legal context and the relevant responses to it. Without this specialist knowledge there are strong risks that children and young people will be given inaccurate information.

There are various ways that this can happen:

- A domestic violence practitioner, specifically trained for this work, working with teachers or youth workers etc to run sessions in school, youth work etc;
- Using specialist programmes of work developed by specialist domestic violence practitioners working with teachers and youth workers;
- The local domestic violence forum steering the work and training specialist domestic violence workers and education staff to work together;
- Domestic violence prevention practitioners training staff in schools and youth work to run the sessions, using a recognised programme of work.

Whoever is involved in running the sessions or has overall responsibility for the class or group of children or young people taking part should have had some specialist domestic violence training, in order to ensure that they have a clear understanding of the topic.

6. Content

Domestic violence prevention work can often be confused with or included in other work such as anti bullying work, child protection work, anger management or emotional literacy. Whilst these are all important and are all in some ways connected to domestic violence prevention, they are not the same and do not fulfil the same aims as domestic violence prevention work.

Outcomes of the work could include:

- Increased understanding of the nature and effects of domestic violence;
- Knowledge of the legal status of domestic violence;
- Knowledge of the range of responses available;
- Ability to identify controlling behaviour and understanding of how this links to domestic violence and abuse;
- Ability to identify certain forms of behaviour as abusive and to identify these as criminal acts where appropriate;
- Knowledge of local support services.

7. Domestic violence, national curriculum and relevant policies

- Every Child Matters
- National Healthy Schools Agenda
- Gender Equality Duty
- Anti-bullying statutory requirements
- National Curriculum requirements for Citizenship
- Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education Framework
- Extended Schools

8. Supporting principles

As well as prevention work, schools and other youth projects may need to deal with domestic violence issues directly if it is affecting a child or young person at home. This can involve:

- Recognising that supporting a mother is a very effective way of supporting a child;
- Working in partnership with other relevant organisations such as social services, refuges etc;
- Ensuring they know who has parental responsibility for a child and if there are any injunctions or residency orders in place and who should be picking up the child;
- Making sure they know if a child is at increased risk (for instance, risk can increase after a family has recently fled domestic violence, during pregnancy, during contact etc);
- Understanding that a child's education may be affected by domestic violence. This can affect their behaviour but can also relate to practical issues such as having to leave school uniforms and books behind, having to travel further to get to school; no space in shared accommodation to do homework, an abusive parent turning up at school etc;
- Confidentiality - ensure that new addresses are kept in a safe confidential place and do not send correspondence to an address if you believe the parent is living with an abusive partner.

9. Child Protection

Whilst the aims of the work are about preventing domestic violence in the future and the nature of the activities usually means that disclosures are not a regular occurrence, some young people may already be affected by domestic violence. They may be primary victims, in an abusive relationship themselves, or secondary victims, as the children of a parent who is being abused by a partner or ex-partner.

This may mean that the child or young person is at risk of suffering significant harm. Schools and youth projects carrying out domestic violence prevention work should ensure that staff involved are aware of the school child protection policy, know who is the designated child protection officer and have received training on child protection. Additionally, the school or youth project should ensure that where necessary staff are given extra guidance about the child protection implications of domestic violence prevention work. This will normally take place during initial training on domestic violence prevention work which should be for the whole staff group (primary teachers) and the welfare staff (primary and secondary schools and other projects).

10. Staff Support

The content of the work requires those involved to reflect carefully on subjects such as intimate relationships, abuse and gender roles.

11. Monitoring and Evaluation

It is important to find out what children and young people gain from the work and if possible, why and how. Schools and others carrying out domestic violence prevention work should therefore ensure that monitoring and evaluation of the outcomes and process of the work takes place as an integral component.

Monitoring outputs should include:

Numbers, ages, gender and ethnicity of children and young people taking part; including the length and content of sessions.

Monitoring and evaluating outcomes should include:

Comparing the attitudes and knowledge of children and young people before and after taking part in sessions or programmes. This can often mean using activities which are part of the programme as tools, such as quizzes, worksheets, activities about attitudes, observation of pupil participation. Sometimes it will mean carrying out additional evaluation activities.

Evaluating processes:

This is a longer term process to review the methods, activities and approaches used and identify how far each helps to achieve the aims and outcomes. This could include:

- Self evaluation by teachers and practitioners leading sessions;
- Observation and peer evaluation by other teachers and practitioners;
- External evaluation by a specialist researcher and/or practitioner, with experience of evaluating similar or related projects and a thorough understanding of the nature of domestic violence.

Appendices

A - Checklist for Schools and Youth Projects

This checklist will help you to assess whether your school or youth project is equipped to support children and young people with the issues of domestic violence.

Key action points	Yes	No	If no, how can this be achieved?
Nominated staff for child protection have domestic violence policy and practice responsibilities included in their remit			
Child protection policy recognises domestic violence as a child protection issue			
Schools and youth projects			

recognise the potential impact of domestic violence on a child's educational attainment and behaviour			
Procedures should be in place to deal with perpetrators who attempt to use the school or project to track down their former partner or child			
Leaflets and posters about domestic violence and available services should be clearly displayed			
Ensure children living in temporary accommodation as a result of domestic violence are able to join the school quickly			
Schools and youth projects should deliver prevention programmes			
Appropriate training on domestic violence for all staff			
Staff alert to warning signs that a child may be affected by domestic violence			
Develop buddy schemes and peer support and education projects			
Provide alternative Opportunities for children to do their homework			

B - Key Links and Resources

Safer Bristol/ DVR: "Spiralling" film and tool kit for domestic violence prevention work with children and young people

<http://www.bristol.gov.uk/ccm/content/Community-Living/Crime-Prevention/safer-bristol-partnership/spiralling-film-and-toolkit.en>

Womankind Worldwide

www.womankind.org.uk

Womankind Worldwide have produced a wide range of resources for use in schools, to promote awareness about gender based violence and sexual bullying.

Sex Education Forum

www.ncb.org.uk/sef

The forum aims to ensure that all young people receive their entitlement to good quality SRE. Their website contains a range of useful factsheets and resources.

Greater London Domestic Violence Project

www.gldvp.org.uk

GLDVP are a second tier organisation who aim to improve the safety and redress the imbalances in opportunity for children/young people witnessing or experiencing domestic violence. The website contains resources and briefings on prevention work. GLDVP also run training and events on issues linked to domestic violence prevention work.

Domestic Violence Responses

DVR have an international reputation for developing and providing high quality resources, training and research activities to help support better responses to domestic abuse and to help prevent it in the future.

The Hideout

www.thehideout.org.uk

The hideout is a website that provides help information and support to children and young people affected by domestic violence. The website also contains a virtual refuge.

Respect for us

www.respect4us.org.uk

Interactive game and informative website for young people about issues including domestic violence, sexual bullying and sexual discrimination

Teachers Support Line

www.teachersupport.info

0800 562 561

Woman's Aid

www.womansaid.org.uk

National domestic violence helpline

0808 2000 247