Safe and Equal
A Guide on Young People and Meaningful Participation for the Violence Against Women and Girls Sector
About AVA

AVA is an expert, ground-breaking and independent charity working across the UK.

Our mission is to inspire innovation and collaboration and encourage and enable direct service providers to help end gender based violence and abuse particularly against women and girls. We do this by:

• Making sure that survivors get the help and support they need in the here and now, through:
  ○ providing innovative training that has a proven direct impact on the professional practice of people supporting survivors of violence and abuse;
  ○ developing a range of toolkits, e-learning and other material that support professionals to provide effective and appropriate support to survivors of violence and abuse;
  ○ using our influence and networks to ensure survivors’ voices are heard.

• Working towards a future where the lives of women and girls are not blighted by gender based violence and abuse by:
  ○ working with children and young people to play our part in raising a generation against violence and abuse;
  ○ innovative and award winning work on prevention – because violence against women and girls, although widespread, is not inevitable;
  ○ enhancing society’s ability to end violence and abuse by carrying out innovative and practical research that fills the gaps in our understanding.

To find out more about AVA please visit our website: www.avaproject.org.uk
And follow us on twitter: @AVAproject

Introduction

The lived experience of service users and survivors are at the heart of AVA’s work. We aim to ensure that all our projects, research and resources are informed and co-produced with experts by experience. In all too many cases, participation of service users is often tokenistic and, in some cases, may re-traumatise survivors. This guide aims to provide an overview of the issues to consider when undertaking meaningful participation with young survivors of abuse and multiple disadvantage. There are challenges to be aware of, but also enormous benefits to survivors, services and communities.

This guide is primarily for practitioners working within the Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) sector but may also be of use to funders and commissioners. The contents are focused on working with children and young people, however the principles are similar for working with adults. AVA provide relevant training to accompany this guide. For details please visit our website.
AVA’s work on participation

AVA has a long track record working with children and young people around preventing, identifying and responding to VAWG. All our work involves the participation of young people to ensure it is as relevant, useful and meaningful as possible.

Some recent examples of our projects involving the participation of young people include:

Peer Education and Leadership Project

This was a Big Lottery Funded project to empower young people to learn about, challenge and respond to domestic and sexual violence. The project focused on ensuring that young people’s voices and experiences are heard, valued and included in service design and delivery.

The overall aim of the project was:

“To deliver therapeutic group work and leadership development to disadvantaged and marginalised young people in order to improve their understanding of domestic and sexual violence, to improve their emotional wellbeing and to empower them to influence peers and also to advocate for the needs of themselves and others within social care and education services.”

We worked with experts around the country including:

• Chilypep in Sheffield
• Sheffield Young Women’s Housing Project
• Rotherham Rise
• Rotherham Integrated Youth Support Service
• Cambridgeshire County Council
• The London Borough of Sutton and Limes College, Sutton
• Changing Lives (formerly Platform 51) in Doncaster and West Kent

Over three years, across our three main sites, we trained 57 young people as accredited peer educators. They went on to design inspirational resources, develop and facilitate innovative group-work programmes to other young people and influence policy makers, commissioners, practitioners and politicians.

There were two strands of work:

1. To pilot a therapeutic group work model with young women across two project sites in Sheffield and Rotherham, focused on improving their emotional wellbeing and their awareness of domestic and sexual violence. This involved a six-week programme of workshops exploring the effects and impacts of domestic abuse, spotting the signs of abusive relationships and improving knowledge of services supporting victims.

2. To pilot a youth leadership development programme (Youth Educators) in four areas of the UK. The programme sought to improve young people’s emotional wellbeing and their understanding of domestic and sexual violence and that of their peers, whilst increasing opportunities for - and the abilities of - young people to influence services aimed at them in relation to domestic and sexual violence. This involved young people taking part in accredited leadership and campaigning training and developing an action plan to take forward in their local area. Young people taking part were required to undertake Domestic Abuse Awareness Raising training before they took part in the leadership course, to ensure they had enough understanding of the issues in a wider context and to make sure they felt safe and comfortable to take part in the project.

The Evaluation of the project concluded that:

The AVA project was accessible to a diverse range of participants including those facing disadvantage and traditionally marginalised from mainstream services and. The project had above average representation from young parents, care experienced young people, those not in education, training or employment, those excluded from mainstream school and young people with experience of domestic and/or sexual violence.

Young people’s motivations for engaging in the project primarily related to developing skills and confidence, gaining greater understanding of domestic and sexual violence (DSV) and helping peers.
Self-reports from young people identified three main ways in which the project benefited their emotional wellbeing and life opportunities. These were characterised as: improved confidence and self-efficacy; improved social networks; increased access to further opportunities (including training, employment and education and other forms of professional support). These messages were supported by evidence from all other project stakeholders.

52 young people received one accreditation and 47 received two.

Evidence suggested that opportunities for participants to ‘cascade learning’ to their peers helped to embed their learning and strengthen their commitment to the issues addressed.

The project improved young people’s capacity to influence service development through the strengthening of leadership and multimedia communication skills, subject specific knowledge and improved political awareness.

There was tangible evidence that young people’s participation elicited a commitment from local decision-makers to respond and adapt local priorities and policy.

“Before I thought I don’t think I could do it [present in public], I thought I’d be too nervous, I wouldn’t be able to talk around people but I think I’ve proven to myself that I can talk to people.”

(Young person)

**Young People’s Steering Group - NICE Guidelines**

AVA established and ran the external advisory group of children and young people affected by Abuse and neglect for the National Institute for Health and Clinical excellence (NICE) and the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) NICE/SCIE. We worked with a group of young experts by experience around England to get their views on services and what they thought should be included as key recommendations in the new guidelines. Via our facilitated focus groups, these young people were able to safely discuss their experiences of abuse and their experiences of services. Significant changes were made to the guidelines as a result.

The young people felt heard, validated and empowered by the process and as a result were invited to produce their own young people’s version of the guidelines. They also contributed blogs and made a film for the BBC as part of the process.

Their guidelines can be found here:


During our work, we have learnt a lot about participation and young people. This toolkit is designed to:

• Help you understand the different types of participation
• Share challenges and best practice
• Hear directly from young people and practitioners
• Explore participation with survivors of gender-based violence
• Showcase innovative work
• Share resources and activities developed by our partner projects and peer educators

This toolkit is designed to be used in conjunction with our training programmes – for more information please visit our website.

https://avaproject.org.uk/ava-training/
What is Participation?

Youth participation is about young people having a meaningful say in decisions that affect their lives.

In 1991, the UK Government ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). This human rights treaty guarantees to all children and young people the right to express their views freely in all matters affecting them and for these views to be given due weight in accordance with the child’s age and maturity (Article 12).

“State parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with age and maturity of the child.”


Following on from that, in 2009 the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child published a General Comment - ‘The right of the child to be heard’ - which developed the meaning of participation:

“A widespread practice has emerged in recent years, which has been broadly conceptualised as ‘participation’, although this term itself does not appear in the text of Article 12. This term has evolved and is now widely used to describe ongoing processes, which include information-sharing and dialogue between children and adults based on mutual respect, and in which children can learn how their views and those of adults are taken into account and shape the outcome of such processes.

Although there is no single universally accepted definition of participation, it is important to understand that the process of participating actually leads to change. It is more than just the ability of children and young people to express themselves, but also whether this expression is heard and whether it effects change.

Key Principles of participation

The following principles should be taken into account when planning participation activities with children and young people:

- Children’s safety and wellbeing is paramount
- The engagement should be purposeful, and not tokenistic
- Children’s participation and contributions should be valued
- Participants must have the opportunity to provide freely given and informed consent
- Facilitators should be open to the possibility that participation may not be in children’s interests and consider not going ahead with ‘engagement’ where safety and wellbeing is in doubt

Balance the safety of young people with the right to be heard

---

1Adapted from: Scottish Government (2009) Practical Guidance on Consulting, Conducting Research and Working in Participative Ways With Children and Young People Experiencing Domestic Abuse
Models of Participation

There are several models which aim to explain participation. Some of the most popular models are discussed below.

The Ladder of Participation Model

This model was originally developed by Arnstein (1969) and then later developed to be specific to children and young people by Hart (1992)\(^2\).

Hart defined participation as ‘the process of sharing decisions which affect one’s life and the life of the community in which one lives. It is a means by which democracy is built and it is a standard against which democracies should be measured’. Hart’s model is commonly used as a basic tool to assess levels of participation with the bottom three levels describing non-participation (and as such should be avoided), and the top levels showing successively more meaningful methods of participation.

Ladder of Youth Participation


While this model provides a useful overview, it can give a false impression of a fixed hierarchy. However Hart does helpfully point out that one important aspect of the model is transparency whereby young people’s participation is not presented as something more involved that it truly was.

The Degrees of Participation Model

In 1997 Phil Treseder² adapted Hart’s Ladder and created the degrees of participation model. This is not based on a hierarchical framework; rather participation depends on the context, children’s views, organisational structure etc. This creates a ‘different but equal form of good practice’.

1. Assigned but informed
   Adults decide on the project and children volunteer for it. The children understand the project, they know who decided to involve them and why. Adults respect young people’s views.

2. Consulted and informed
   The project is designed and run by adults, but children are consulted. They have a full understanding of the process and their opinions are taken seriously.

3. Adult-initiated, shared decisions with children
   Adults have the initial idea, but young people are involved in every step of the planning and implementation. Not only are their views considered, but also children are also involved in taking the decisions.

4. Child-initiated, shared decisions with adults
   Children have the ideas, set up projects and come to adults for advice, discussion and support. The adults do not direct, but offer their expertise for young people to consider.

5. Child-initiated and directed
   Young people have the initial idea and decide how the project is to be carried out. Adults are available but do not take charge.

The Pathways to Participation Model

Shier also developed Hart’s model and identified five levels of participation. According to Shier (2001)⁴ there are three levels of commitment relating to participation.

1. Openings – when adults are committed to children and young people’s participation and are determined to work towards it, even if an opportunity does not exist there are openings;
2. Opportunities – when the adult has the necessary resources, training and skills to make participation happen there are opportunities;
3. Obligations – when an organisation puts a policy which states that participation is part of their staff’s practice, there is an obligation.

---

Pathways to Participation
Harry Shier 2001

Levels of Participation

5
Children share power and responsibility for decision-making.

Are you ready to share some of your adult power with children?

Is there a procedure that enables children and adults to share power and responsibility for decisions?

Is it a policy requirement that children and adults share power and responsibility for decisions?

4
Children are involved in decision-making processing.

Are you ready to let children join in your decision-making processes?

Is there a procedure that enables children to join in decision-making processes?

Is it a policy requirement that children must be involved in decision-making processes?

3
Children’s views are taken into account.

Are you ready to take children’s views into account?

Does your decision-making process enable you to take children’s views into account?

Is it a policy requirement that children’s views must be given due weight in decision-making?

2
Children are supported in expressing their views.

Are you ready to support children in expressing their views?

Do you have a range of ideas and activities to help children express their views?

Is it a policy requirement that children must be supported in expressing their views?

1
Children are listened to.

Are you ready to listen to children?

Do you work in a way that enables you to listen to children?

Is it a policy requirement that children must be listened to?

The model was developed in close relation to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, whereby Article 12 states that ‘children have the right to say what they think should happen when adults are making decisions that affect them and have their opinions taken into account’. In this model, level 3 represents the minimum requirements laid out in the Convention.
What do we mean by Meaningful Participation?

The World Health Organisation states that ‘Meaningful participation requires that individuals are entitled to participate in the decisions that directly affect them, including in the design, implementation, and monitoring of interventions’⁵. This may take many forms but essentially is underlined by the principle that those who are affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision-making process.

When working with survivors of abuse there is also the added consideration that any participation must take place within a trauma-informed environment and seek to empower and not re-traumatise.

Many organisations are now using more participatory methods in their work, but unfortunately many of them are still tokenistic and may do more harm than good. Below are some examples of low, medium and high participation methods identified in our research that are commonly used, with those rated as low to be avoided.

Examples of Low, Medium and High Participation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Last minute consultations</td>
<td>Taking part in focus groups</td>
<td>Developing new resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Testing new resources/activities</td>
<td>Speaking at events</td>
<td>Developing and facilitating programmes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attending events but not taking part directly</td>
<td>Fundraising</td>
<td>Organising and running events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scripted speaking at events</td>
<td>Participation in order to create a ‘shared understanding’ between young people and adults</td>
<td>Lobbying and advocacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities that are only accessible to some young people</td>
<td></td>
<td>Peer education and research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involvement in order to further adult aims</td>
<td></td>
<td>Running focus groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children wearing branded T-shirts</td>
<td></td>
<td>Interviewing potential staff members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Young inspectors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Training others</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

⁵http://www.who.int/gender-equity-rights/understanding/participation-definition/en/
There is also evidence to show the value of children and young people’s participation.

Stanley et al. note, ‘Active participation in prevention initiatives was considered to enhance learning –’people learn better by doing’ . Another study concluded that ‘many teen dating violence and sexual assault risk reduction programs will and should include peer education or youth leadership components. Doing so is empowering, respectful of youth, and makes programs more relevant to the adolescents’.

Working with Young People Who Have Experienced Abuse

Houghton\textsuperscript{8} states that ‘perpetrators of domestic abuse give children no choice in making them participants in the situation of domestic abuse. Despite the best efforts of the non-abusing mother, children are aware of what is going on, are witness to and involved in domestic abuse and are often directly abused: within that situation children make complex decisions in order to survive, protect themselves and others, intervene, and where possible get on with their lives’.

Young people are social actors and experts in their own lives, however, all too often the fact that they are defined as ‘victims’ of abuse prevents them from being treated as such. The governments’ safeguarding guidance ‘Working Together to Safeguard Children’\textsuperscript{9} states clearly that organisations should have ‘a culture of listening to children and taking account of their wishes and feelings, both in individual decisions and the development of services’ and yet all too often this is not the case and young people report feeling frustrated and disempowered.

Many young people want to be included in decisions made about their lives, and additionally want to help support others in similar situations and influence those in positions of power. Meaningful participation and peer education work can empower young people to regain power and create opportunities for their voices to be heard, listened to and acted upon.

When working with vulnerable young people it is crucial that any form of participation does no further harm them by re-traumatisation. You can do this by using the trauma informed principles below as well as assessing each participant for their readiness to take part. Things to note in an assessment include:

\begin{itemize}
  \item Current levels of risk
  \item Access to appropriate support
  \item Other projects/services they may be involved with already
  \item Capacity to consent freely
  \item Experiences of domestic abuse (how recent, duration, severity etc)
  \item Impacts of trauma which may affect their ability to participate at the moment
  \item Any additional individual needs
\end{itemize}

Houghton encourages services to bear in mind the three C’s:

\begin{itemize}
  \item Consent
  \item Confidentiality
  \item Child Protection
\end{itemize}

With true and safe participation methods aiming to achieve the three E’s

\begin{itemize}
  \item Empowerment
  \item Emancipation
  \item Enjoyment
\end{itemize}

Young people who have experienced abuse may also still be in crisis which can affect how ready they are to engage with services, how easy it is to reach them and may involve challenging behaviours linked to the trauma they have experienced.

The safety of the young person must always be paramount and there may be occasions where the worker has to override the wishes and involvement of young people if the work will put them at risk or re-traumatise them. This is a difficult conflict and highlights the importance of skilled workers assessing a young person’s safety and ability to be involved prior to the start of any work.

However, many young people still in crisis appreciate being part of a project that is not solely focused on risk minimisation but also offers them a chance to have their voices heard and empowers them.\textsuperscript{10}

\textsuperscript{9}HM Government (2016) Working Together to Safeguard Children
Using a Trauma Informed Approach

When working with survivors of abuse, it is vital to understand abuse as a form of trauma and to ensure that any participation does not re-traumatise. The concept of a trauma informed approach is underpinned by four assumption and six key principles.

The Four Assumptions of a Trauma Informed Approach

A programme, organisation, or system that is trauma-informed realises the widespread impact of trauma and understands potential paths for recovery; recognises the signs and symptoms of trauma in clients, families, staff, and others involved with the system; and responds by fully integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, and practices, and seeks to actively resist re-traumatisation.

The Six Key Principles of a Trauma-Informed Approach

1. Safety

When working with young survivors of abuse, it is important that they feel both physically and emotionally safe. Organisations must first seek to understand what will make each individual feel safe, as this may vary for each child.

2. Trustworthiness and Transparency

Building and maintaining a trusting relationship is of paramount importance and one of the first things that survivors of abuse say is important in helping them to feel safe enough to engage with a service or project.

3. Peer Support

Working with peers of a similar age who have experienced similar issues can be an empowering way to build confidence and trust, reduce isolation, enhance collaboration and promote recovery and healing. Often the peer support can be just as valuable, if not more so, as the work they are participating in.

4. Collaboration and Mutuality

Survivors of abuse often feel disempowered and therefore it is crucial that organisations are aware of power differences between staff and service users and attempt to level them where possible. Some of the most meaningful work and healing takes place where there is a sharing of power and a focus on equality. Recognising survivors as experts in their own lives with valuable insight into how services should respond is an important starting point for any participation project.

5. Empowerment, Voice and Choice

Many people who have experienced abuse, and other forms of multiple disadvantage, feel that their voice and experience is not important or that no-one will believe or listen to them. Meaningful participation is a great way to help to empower young people; most of whom are keen to be involved to prevent other children experiencing the same disadvantages in the future. Time should be spent at the beginning of any project explaining the genuine ways they can get their voices heard and providing reassurance that they will be heard, believed and acted upon. Young people should also be given choices for how they want to participate.

6. Cultural and Gender Issues

It is crucial to consider every participant’s individual needs and experiences and understand how issues such as gender, race, disability, age, religion and sexual orientation may impact on their experiences of abuse and of services, and on their ability to meaningfully participate. Consider what you need to do to ensure your project is inclusive and accessible to all.

---

11SAMHSA (2014) Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach
Benefits to Children and Young People

There are many benefits for children and young people when they are able to meaningfully participate. These include:

- Providing an opportunity to develop a sense of autonomy, independence and social responsibility
- Leadership skills
- Children and young people develop an increased sense of ownership and belonging
- Increased self-esteem and self-efficacy
- Increased confidence
- Improved career choices
- Improved relationships
- Improved communication and collaboration skills
- An understanding of civic and political processes
- Increased motivation to achieve
- Allowing them to claim their rights
- Empowerment
- An opportunity to shape service design and delivery and professional responses
- Promoting acceptance and understanding of others
- Helping with their journey of recovery post-abuse

“My confidence has been the biggest factor that I have learned. At the beginning I didn’t think I could complete a six week course but I have overcome this and my confidence grew more every week. I am able to speak confidently to more people and not to doubt myself.” (Young person)

Case Study – Kirsty

“I have been involved with the AVA project from the beginning. I was looking for something to get involved with and it sounded like a good opportunity. I started off being part of the group and completed all the training with other Youth Educators. Over the last two years, I got more and more involved with the YWAVE research project; I led focus groups with young people and service providers. I was nervous about doing this at first but the more I did I enjoyed it. I also planned and ran awareness raising sessions for young people around healthy relationships. I analysed all the research findings and worked with Mary, a research volunteer, to write the research report. I didn’t think I would get the opportunity to do a lot of the stuff that I have done, but I am really proud of what I have achieved!! Now I work at Chilypep and hope to go to University one day”

Case Study – Kirsty
The Role of Practitioners

Research has shown that practitioners are much more likely than clients to believe that their work is participative; the role of the workers journey in achieving meaningful participation is evident in AVA’s research. There are understandable challenges to undertaking this work, including frustrations from services who are under increasing pressure from funders and commissioners to show that they have involved service users in service design and delivery. True participation requires skilled and confident workers and appropriate time and resources. Current funding cuts to specialist services and increased referrals for young people affected by abuse and trauma increase the pressures that practitioners are under.

However, participation can have huge benefits, not just to the young people involved but also to practitioners and the services they represent.

The key roles of practitioners should include:

• Being an advocate for young people’s right to participate
• Supporting young people in active participation and decision making
• Challenging views that undermine young people’s involvement
• Being a positive role model
• Creating a safe space for young people who have experienced abuse to participate safely
• An ability to assess risk and readiness
• A willingness to hand over ‘power’ to young people
• An opportunity to reflect on their own practice and be open to change

Benefits to Practitioners, Services and Society

There are many benefits of children and young people’s participation to individual practitioners, services and society in general. A key benefit is that participation can improve services and their ability to meaningfully engage with young people. This happens by:

• Gaining new perspectives and fresh ideas
• Additional data to help improve services
• Providing understanding about the reality of their experiences
• Greater acceptance of messages and policies as children and young people were actively involved in developing them
• Enhanced credibility of the service
• Better informed about issues, views and priorities of children and young people
• Services more able to address the needs of children and young people
• Recognition of children and young people as experts on their own lives who are skilled communicators and active agents who can influence and interact with the world around them
• Improved status for children and young people generally
• Improved relationships between older and younger members of society
• Decrease in anti-social behaviours

Doing Participation Safely

Ethical issues: Confidentiality and Consent

- Children and young people have the right to privacy, to express their views confidentially and to have their anonymity protected. These rights are very important to children and young people, especially those who have experienced abuse.
- There are limits to confidentiality, particularly if information is disclosed about the safety of the children and young people taking part or of other young people. In these cases action should be taken in discussion with the child or young person.
- The limits to confidentiality should be agreed in advance by adults undertaking the engagement. Clear, simple information should be made available to children and young people about these limits.
- Children and young people should be able to decide to participate without being under pressure to take part. Safety should always be a priority.
- Children and young people should be able to give consent to take part freely and this should be an ongoing process. They should be able to withdraw at any time without it impacting on any other aspect of their ongoing work or participation in other activities.
- Decide in advance about the procedures for asking parents or care-givers for consent for children and young people to take part in activities.

‘For participation to be substantial adults must learn to respect children and listen to their views, they must come to see children as competent and capable social actors who can participate meaningfully in decision-making processes, and they must be willing to invest both the financial and human resources necessary to enable and facilitate children’s participation’ (O’Kane, 2002)

How Can Children and Young People Participate?

This will vary depending on your service and the support available. Here are some suggestions:

- Auditing your current service provision to see how inclusive it is for various groups of young people
- Consultations with other young people to ascertain views on certain topics
- Development of resources/awareness raising materials/training programmes
- Co-facilitation of training/events
- Peer researchers to undertake more in-depth interviews on more sensitive issues
- Developing and delivering group work sessions on topics such as healthy relationships to other young people
- Sitting on steering groups
- Having young trustees as part of your board

“[Being involved in the project] has increased my self-esteem and aided my recovery as it has given me a focus and a sense of achievement as well as giving me aspirations to use my experiences and understanding to continue helping others in similar situations and improve current mental health services and young people’s general understanding of domestic abuse.” (young person)
Case Study – The Youth Involvement Group

Off the Record (in Bath and Bristol) created a Youth Involvement Group who worked with AVA to develop and deliver a comprehensive VAWG awareness raising programme across their school. The Youth Involvement Group began by working intensively to understand violence against women and girls and to audit current resources. They then wrote an education resource pack to be used within their own school that had clear session plans and guidance. This included creating a Safe and Equal Gauge to identify the views of other children regarding violence against women and girls within the school. This was delivered as part of their IT classes as it had been designed as an online survey. 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 was 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).

You can download a copy of the Safe and Equal Gauge here for use in schools (this can also be amended to be suitable for other settings). It is useful to input the questions onto an online tool such as ‘survey monkey’ in order to do some simple evaluation and analysis of the results.

Domestic and Sexual Abuse Awareness Programme

Before undertaking any participation work with young people who have experienced abuse, it is important to ensure they are safe and ready to do this work. As part of the AVA programmes, all peer educators complete a 6-8 week programme where they are able to safely explore issues relating to abuse, identify their feelings, identify help-seeking behaviours and support, and decide if they were ready to complete the accredited course in peer education and leadership.

Organisations may already have their own one-to-one or group sessions which address these issues. This section gives and overview of the main topics and issues that should be included.

For a comprehensive training course in working with young people affected by abuse and the AVA manualised group work programme for young people, please visit the AVA website.

The AVA Prevention platform also has a substantial database of lesson plans and resources that can be used for these sessions.
Typically, weekly sessions last for 1.5-2 hours. If young people are working towards an accreditation in peer education, the hours spent on this part of the programme could count towards that award.

Every session should begin with an ice-breaker activity, a recap of the group agreements and a check in to see how everyone is feeling and how they have been since the last session. Each session should end with a check out, a positive affirmation/self-esteem exercise and an evaluation task.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Learning Outcomes/Aims</th>
<th>Session Content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Getting to know the group Setting group agreements</td>
<td>Introductions, discussing the purpose for the group and making the links to future participation work, setting group agreements, discussing rights and responsibilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Defining types of abuse Outline abusive tactics in relationships</td>
<td>Defining the different forms of abuse (including coercive control, sexual abuse, rape and consent, so called honour based crimes and the use of technology to abuse)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Being able to label and identify feelings</td>
<td>Discussing the importance of feelings, using the cognitive behavioural analogy of ‘ice-berging’ feelings to link behaviours, thoughts, feelings and beliefs, learning how to express anger safely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Providing opportunity to safely talk about own experiences</td>
<td>Use of films* to show an abusive relationship as a medium to safely talk about experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Challenging the normalisation of abuse and sexism in society</td>
<td>Discussing how society contributes to abuse, critiquing models of masculinity and hetero-normative assumptions, gender inequality, critiquing sexism in the media and music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Develop a safety plan Understand responsibility for abuse and decrease self-blame</td>
<td>Discuss what they have done previously to keep safe and what they can do in the future, complete individual safety plans, discuss responsibility for abuse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Identifying help agencies and sources of support</td>
<td>Discussing experiences of support – both good and bad, identifying local and national support services, identifying family and friends who can help, designing a poster to help others find support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Increase self-esteem Prepare to leave the group</td>
<td>Discuss what self-esteem is and what makes each of the group special, identify positive self-talk, appreciate others strengths, review the past sessions, prepare for next steps, closure activity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*A list of recommended films can be found on the AVA prevention platform.
Peer Mentoring and Leadership Training

AVA have worked with partners to offer accredited training courses for young people in peer mentoring and leadership.

1. Accredited qualification (from the National Open College Network) in peer mentoring (developed by Changing Lives and AVA) which involved several weekly sessions and ongoing activities to make up an extensive portfolio of work. Young people can then go on to develop their own group work programmes which they can facilitate with other young people in their communities.

2. Residential course in peer leadership. This course was developed by Chilypep and was accredited by ASDAN. The course helps young people to develop their ideas and campaigns, in relation to VAWG. This section will summarise the activities that make up the accreditation for both courses.

### Learning Outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning Outcomes</th>
<th>Assessment Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. Understand the role of young people as peer mentors. | 1.1. Outline the role of young people as peer mentors including:  
a) boundaries  
b) signposting  
c) role in local community  
1.2. Outline advantages of being a peer mentor to a young person. |
| 2. Understand why peer mentoring is important to young people. | 2.1. Outline benefits to a young person of working with a peer mentor.  
2.2. Outline benefits of peer mentoring to the community.  
2.3. State the importance of confidentiality in the peer mentoring process and its limits. |
| 3. Recognise ways to assess own work with young people in the role of peer mentor. | 3.1. Outline ways to assess own work as a peer mentor and associated benefits.  
3.2. Plan and apply a tool for assessing own work as a peer mentor. |

Peer Mentoring Course

Although this course was designed by Platform 51 and AVA, if you are registered as an National Open College Network centre you can access and run the course. Please visit the site here or search for the course ‘Understanding the role of young people as peer mentors’ with the qualification code: 601/3325/9

The course is level one and worth 3 credits.
“Young people need groups like this to empower themselves and others to make a difference. I firmly believe that to change the world you have to start locally and help people have the confidence to make positive changes in their lives and in other peoples.”
(young person)

In order to meet the learning outcomes young people completed the activities summarised below. You can come up with your own activities but they must correspond to the learning outcomes above in order to meet the required level of knowledge.

**Activity 1 – What is peer mentoring?**

- The definition of mentoring is provided (using X-factor as an example!)
- The definition of a peer is provided and the link is made between the two

‘Mentoring is about giving and receiving support and help in a non-threatening, informal environment. The mentor is often more experienced and will work with the mentee to help them achieve their goals… A peer mentor is a mentor who is closer in age to the person they are mentoring and they may have experienced similar issues to the mentee in the past which they have now overcome, meaning they can share their wisdom and knowledge’.

- Young people come up with their own definition of a peer mentor
- The group look at a selection of words (such as: role model, cool peer, babysitter, friend, social worker, guide, counsellor, coach etc) and decide which come under the heading ‘a peer mentor is’ and which are under ‘a peer mentor is not’.

**Activity 2 – Boundaries**

- The group define what is meant by ‘boundaries’ and the difference between being a mentor and a friend

‘Boundaries are rules which govern a relationship, they are often informal and are not written down but they are important in a peer mentoring role’.

- The group are given several scenarios and are asked to write down what they would do in each situation. An example is:

‘The young person you are mentoring requests you as a friend on facebook, what do you do and why?’

- Confidentiality is discussed and the group share what they think about the importance of confidentiality and trust. They then identify 2 reasons why this is so important.
- They also consider times when they may need to break confidentiality and the process for doing so.
- The group are given more scenarios where they have to decide if they need to tell someone else, who they would refer to and why. For example:
  - ‘The young woman you are mentoring tells you that last night her partner hit their young child and left a mark on her legs. This is not the first time it has happened’

‘The young women you are mentoring tells you she had unprotected sex last night and is worried she may be pregnant’.

**Activity 3 – My role as a peer mentor**

The group are reminded that they are doing this course to be able to mentor young people affected by abuse. They are asked to think about this role in more detail and fill in the following questions:

What is the title of your role?
Which organisations will you be working with?
How will your mentee be selected?
How often will you meet with them?
How long is the relationship expected to continue?
How will you be supported?
What records are you expected to keep?

The group then look at job descriptions for volunteer peer mentoring roles and the write their own job description, bearing in mind the client group they will be working with.

**Activity 4 – The Benefits of Having a Mentor**

- The benefits of mentors are discussed and young people are invited to draw a lifeline showing positive and negative events in someone’s life. They then mark on the lifeline the times when someone could have benefited from a mentor.
- They then write down the top 3 benefits to having a mentor.
• The group then think specifically about someone experiencing domestic violence and write the benefits for that young person.
• They then consider that the mentor themselves may benefit also and write down the key benefits to themselves (i.e.: increased self-esteem, new skills, something to add to their CV, satisfaction of giving back to the community). This is a good time to think about what they hope to get out of being a mentor.
• Community – the wider community should also benefit if peer mentoring is done well. They may experience a decrease in teenage pregnancy, substance use, crime, school exclusion etc. The group list the benefits to the community and then specifically think about the benefits of a project that focuses on domestic violence.

Activity 5 – Assessing Your Mentoring

• The importance of reflecting on your work. The group decide on three reasons as to why it is important to reflect and assess your own work. They consider the following:
  • They then come up with ideas for how to reflect on and assess their work before developing their own assessment tool. They can test if it works by role playing a mentoring session then using the tool.

“I have learnt to have confidence in myself and my delivery and content of my sessions. That I can work well in a team, organise my work and work for deadlines. I hope to use all I have learnt in my new job in a secondary school, especially the peer mentoring to try and help as many young people that I can.” (young person)

Peer Leadership Qualification

Chilypep have developed an excellent peer leadership course, it is designed to be run over a three day residential. Please contact them for further details. The information below is a basic summary of the types of activities and issues covered on the course.

http://www.chilypep.org.uk/

Over the course of the residential it is important to bear in mind:
• Personal experiences and emotional well being
• How well the group know each other/group dynamics
• Equality and diversity
• Confidence and trust levels
• Literacy levels, communication and learning styles
• Energy levels
• Risk assessments for any planned activity
## Monitoring and Evaluating

Services are under increasing pressure to evidence the effectiveness of their work. Whilst this is important for future funding, it is also an important tool to measure the outcomes of the work and to ensure that young people have been involved appropriately. The findings can be used to improve projects and services in the future.

Evaluation techniques can be both quantitative (numbers and figures) and qualitative (non-numerical feedback). It is important that evaluation is an ongoing practice which takes place during the life of the project. Evaluations can be done internally or via an external evaluator, but in both cases should include a range of stakeholders and, where possible, young people should be involved in designing and carrying out the evaluation themselves. This is a skill that can be integrated into their peer leadership training.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Element</th>
<th>Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Intro to course, team building and group agreement | Welcome and introductions  
Hopes, fears and expectations of YP/staff  
Course requirements ASDAN  
Group agreement exercise |
| Icebreaker  
Young people’s rights | Rights Auction |
| Deciding group aims and outcomes, identity and structure  
Running meetings  
Equality and diversity | Naming your group  
What is the purpose of the group?  
What ‘jobs’ (roles) are needed to make the group work?  
Identify personal strengths/barriers/issues for group members and roles/tasks they can take up  
Decide roles/responsibilities |
| Representing others  
Equality and diversity | Consultation and evaluation |
| Exploring and identifying possible actions for change | Campaign ideas and methods  
Dragons den style voting to decide the best campaigns  
Look at public speaking and presentation skills |
| Deciding priorities and objectives | Diamond priority exercise  
Decide 2 priorities  
Recap methods and consider which ones would work  
Choose 1/2 methods for each priority |
| Project/Action planning | Design a project plan |
| Identify evaluation/impact methods/tools | Explore these questions:  
‘How will you know if you’ve achieved your aim?’  
‘What can you do to find out?’  
Agree evaluation tools |
| Close | Recap on group aims, action plan, structure, roles and next steps |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quantitative Measures</th>
<th>Qualitative Measures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attendance figures</td>
<td>Focus group/interview feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Numbers of young people taking part in activities</td>
<td>Quotes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey data</td>
<td>Open ended questions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There are a range of elements to evaluate, each with various methods of collecting data. It is important to evaluate the young people who are participating and leading the work as well as those they are working with, and other key stakeholders. There are several key issues to evaluate including:

- The well-being of all participants
- Skills, knowledge and confidence
- Satisfaction with the project – what went well, what could be improved

Where possible, data should be collected before, during and after each project in order to show change and to inform future delivery.

Equalities monitoring is also important to ensure your project is inclusive and reaching as many different groups as possible.

**Top Tips!**

Here are some top tips for meaningful participation with children and young people:

- Clearly explain exactly what the project is and what is expected of them
- Offer incentives such as food or vouchers for attendance at meetings and make sure to pay for expenses
- Work closely with other organisations and ensure each participant has on-going support
- Consider how to engage more ‘hard to reach’ young people – remember it is often not that they are unwilling to engage but more that services have not engaged with them in the right way
- Think about how to ensure you are using a trauma informed approach
- Not everyone needs to be involved to the same extent – offer options
- Think carefully about the makeup of any groups – how can you ensure everyone feels safe to participate?
- Be creative! Don’t be afraid to try new techniques – if you are struggling for ideas, the young people will have a lot!
- Use social media to promote participation opportunities
- Where possible, try to accredit the training and work that young people do
- Watch out for any signs that a young person may be upset or traumatised by the work and offer them support
- Consider the individual needs of each participant and how this may impact on their ability to participate
- Have fun! This can be one of the most rewarding ways to work for all involved.

“I would definitely recommend young people get involved in a project like this! You will meet like-minded, lovely people and you will gain the skills and confidence to achieve the things you want in your life. Opportunities like these need to be taken with both hands.” (Young person)

**Resources**

Children and Young People’s Commissioner (Scotland) The Seven Golden Rules for Participation

Unicef - FACT SHEET: The right to participation

Participation Works website

Save the Children – Participation Resources

SAMHSA - Trauma Informed Approaches