

# Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)

Advisory Group final report  
and recommendations



department for  
**children, schools and families**

# DCSF Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Advisory Group final report and recommendations

## Purpose and membership of advisory group

1. DCSF set up the Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) Advisory Group in July 2009. Its key role is to provide advice to Ministers on how schools can most effectively tackle the issue of violence against women and girls, as part of the development of the cross government VAWG Strategy.
2. The VAWG Advisory Group is made up of experts and practitioners representing key stakeholder organizations: schools, the Anti-Bullying Alliance, the PSHE Association, the Sex Education Forum, Kids Taskforce, the NSPCC, Womankind, Refuge, Women's Aid, the End Violence Against Women Coalition, and the Greater London Domestic Violence Project. Over the last six months, the Group has considered how current strands of DCSF work with schools, which have the potential to impact on the violence against girls and women agenda, can be most effectively harnessed to maximise impact. The Group considered specific issues (e.g. pornography), evidence of the effectiveness of previous interventions in schools, and policy developments (e.g. the new Sex and Relationships Guidance for schools).
3. The Group advised the DCSF on its contributions to the Home Office's cross government strategy, 'Together we can End Violence Against Women and Girls', launched in November 2009. This report reflects the Group's scrutiny of current relevant work strands and makes recommendations on new strands of work to ensure schools' impact on preventing and tackling violence against women and girls is maximised.

## Legislation on Violence Against Women and Girls

4. The UK Government has endorsed the following International laws which secures the right of women and the recommendations found in this report reflect but do not go beyond the principles and actions which the UK Government is already committed to:
  - United Nations (1995) Beijing Platform for Action United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women

- Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) (1979).
  - UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
  - Council of Europe's Plan of Action to Combat Violence Against Women (CoE, 1997) and Recommendation Rec(2002)5 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the protection of women against violence adopted on 30 April 2002(Council of Europe)
5. The above legislation secures the legal right of children and young people to information on sex and relationships, and sets out the Government's obligation to organise and fund training of education staff on gender equality so that educational institutions act to prevent and protect against VAWG.
6. For example, the Beijing Platform for Action (1995) Point D.1, 224. (K) states the "Government must take action to...Adopt all appropriate measures, especially in the field of education, to modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women, and to eliminate prejudices, customary practices and all other practices based on the idea of the inferiority or superiority of either of the sexes and on stereotyped roles for men and women". Point D.1, 224 (G) goes on to state " Actions to be undertaken by educational institutions include: Organize and fund information campaigns and educational and training programmes in order to sensitize girls and boys and women and men to the personal and social detrimental effects of violence in the family, community and society; teach them how to communicate without violence and promote training for victims and potential victims so that they can protect themselves and others against such violence"
7. Furthermore, the Council of Europe's Recommendation Rec(2002)5 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the protection of women against violence adopted on 30 April 2002 states that Member States should 'introduce or reinforce a gender perspective in human rights education programmes, and reinforce sex education programmes that give special importance to gender equality and mutual respect:
- 7.1 Ensure that both boys and girls receive a basic education that avoids social and cultural patterns, prejudices and stereotyped roles for the sexes and includes training in assertiveness skills, with special attention to young people in difficulty at school;
  - 7.2 Train all members of the teaching profession to integrate the concept of gender equality in their teaching;

8. The UN Convention of the Rights of the Child states that;
- 'The education to which every child has a right is one designed to promote a culture which is infused by appropriate human rights value'.
  - 'A school which allows bullying or other violent and exclusionary practices to occur is not one which meets the requirements of article 29 (1). The term "human rights education" is too often used in a way which greatly oversimplifies its connotations. What is needed, in addition to formal human rights education, is the promotion of values and policies conducive to human rights within schools'
  - 'Gender discrimination can be reinforced by practices such as a curriculum which is inconsistent with the principles of gender equality, by arrangements which limit the benefits girls can obtain from the educational opportunities offered, and by unsafe or unfriendly environments which discourage girls' participation.'
  - 'The effective promotion of article 29 (1) requires the fundamental reworking of curricula to include the various aims of education and the systematic revision of textbooks and other teaching materials and technologies, as well as school policies. Approaches which do no more than seek to superimpose the aims and values of the article on the existing system without encouraging any deeper changes are clearly inadequate'
  - 'The relevant values cannot be effectively integrated into, and thus be rendered consistent with, a broader curriculum unless those who are expected to transmit, promote, teach and, as far as possible, exemplify the values have themselves been convinced of their importance. Pre-service and in-service training schemes which promote the principles reflected in article 29 (1) are thus essential for teachers, educational administrators and others involved in child education.'
9. CEDAW (Part III, Article 10) urges State Parties "to adopt education and public information programmes, which will eliminate prejudices and current practices that hinder the full operation of the principle of the social equality of women." and "The elimination of any stereotyped concept of the roles of men and women at all levels and in all forms of education ... in particular, by the revision of textbooks and school programmes and the adaptation of teaching methods"
10. *Gender Equality Duty 2007* (introduced under the Equality Act 2006). All public authorities (including schools) must demonstrate that they are promoting equality for women and men (and girls and boys), and that they are eliminating sexual discrimination and harassment. Schools are required to have a gender-equality scheme in place that sets out how they are meeting the duty, which must include gender equality objectives to tackle their major gender equality issues.

## DCSF initiatives

11. Every Child Matters is a shared programme of change to improve outcomes for all children and young people. Two of the five outcomes are highly relevant to work on VAWG, namely 'Stay Safe' and 'Be Healthy'. Aims that relate directly to work on VAWG are included under the 'Stay Safe' outcome: "safe from maltreatment, neglect, violence and sexual exploitation", "safe from bullying and discrimination", and "safe from crime and anti-social behaviour in and out of school". The same is true for aims included under the 'Be Healthy' outcome: "Physically healthy", "Mentally and emotionally healthy" and "Sexually healthy". VAWG should therefore be incorporated in to actions undertaken to meet these Every Child Matters Outcomes and Aims.
12. The mental health and psychological wellbeing of children and young people is one of the 11 standards of the National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services (the Children's NSF). VAWG is extremely detrimental to children and young people's mental and psychological wellbeing. For example, children who have witnessed domestic violence have, by definition according to the British Psychological Society, suffered psychological abuse. They are also considered to be 'at risk of significant harm' (Adoption and Children Act, 2002). The majority of children living in a domestic violence context do witness the violence, and in 90% of cases they are in the same or next room (Hughes, 1992). Research shows that children who live with domestic violence are at increased risk of behavioural problems and emotional trauma, and mental health difficulties in adult life. (Morley and Mullender, 1994; Hester et al.,2000). In addition, the link between child physical abuse and domestic violence is high, with estimates ranging between 30% to 66% depending upon the study (Hester et al, 2000; Edleson,1999; Humphreys & Thiara, 2002).
13. The DCSF is funding Targeted Mental Health in Schools (TaMHS), a three-year pathfinder programme aimed at supporting the development of innovative models of therapeutic and holistic mental health support in schools for children and young people aged 5 to 13 at risk of, and/or experiencing, mental health problems, and their families. We recommend that this programme include a focus on VAWG in its programme of work.
14. National Healthy Schools requires all schools to promote positive emotional health and wellbeing. A key criterion relevant to VAWG is support and advice for crisis, combating stigma and discrimination, supporting vulnerable individuals and bullying. A whole-school approach to VAWG will help schools to meet criteria. In the enhanced model VAWG may be the focus for locally agreed health and well-being outcomes.

## Background on violence against women and girls

15. For the purpose of this report and consistency, the Group used the definition of VAWG as described in the *Together we can end violence against women and girls*’ consultation document, which adopted the Beijing *Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women* definition:

*Violence that is directed against a woman because she is a woman or that affects women disproportionately.*

16. This includes violence committed at home, in public, online or through the use of technology resulting in physical, sexual, psychological or economic harm, including threats of such acts, and the term women includes girls. Specific forms of violence include:
1. domestic abuse (including financial abuse);
  2. sexual violence, abuse and exploitation (including commercial exploitation);
  3. sexual harassment and bullying;
  4. pornography including through published magazines (such as sexualised images of children and young people), via internet and by mobile;
  5. stalking;
  6. trafficking, forced prostitution (in adults) and all child sexual exploitation;
  7. female genital mutilation;
  8. forced marriage; and
  9. crimes said to be committed in the name of ‘honour.’
17. Technology such as the internet and mobile phones, and its increased use by children and young people represent a significant medium through, which VAWG is expressed and propagated. For example, so-called ‘sexting’ can make it possible for a sexually explicit image to be shared with a large group of people (including peers) at the touch of a button.
18. As stated in the Beijing Platform for Action (1995), point D/ 118.: “Images in the media of violence against women, as well as the use of women and girls as sex objects, including pornography, are factors contributing to the continued

prevalence of such violence [VAWG], adversely influencing the community at large, in particular children and young people.”

19. Though progress has been made in this area, this is an enduring issue. Children and young women are at risk of violence directly and also affected by adult violence, particularly within the home. A recent 2009 study by the NSPCC/Bristol University questioned 1,353 young people (aged between 13 and 17 years old, from eight UK schools) on violence in their intimate relationships. Key points from the research include the following:
- 33% of girls and 16% of boys responding to the survey reported some form of sexual partner violence.
  - 25% of girls (the same proportion as adult women) and 18% of boys reported some form of physical partner violence.
  - Around 75% of girls and 50% of boys reported some form of emotional partner violence.
  - Girls were more likely than boys to say that the partner violence was experienced repeatedly and also that it either remained at the same level of severity, or worsened.
  - Younger participants (aged 13 to 15 years old) were as likely as older adolescents (aged 16 and over) to experience some forms of violence.
  - Factors associated both with experiencing and perpetrating teenage partner violence included: previous experiences of child maltreatment; domestic violence in the family, and aggressive peer networks.
20. There is a range of evidence that young people do not feel that they are given sufficient information about sex, relationships, and violence. Though schools are only one potential source, they have an important role to play as a trusted source of information, in an environment where children and young people can discuss issues with teachers and their contemporaries. An ICM poll found that 77% of young people feel they do not have enough information and support to deal with physical or sexual violence.<sup>1</sup> A poll undertaken by the UK Youth Parliament found that four out of 10 young people said they received no relationship education at school and only one in four believed that the lessons they had received had been “good”. In terms of domestic violence specifically, 8 out of 10 girls said that they hadn’t learnt anything about domestic violence in schools, and instead they are getting their information through the media. Significantly, the research found that young women had not considered more subtle forms of controlling behaviours as

1 ICM poll, November 2006, commissioned by EVAW: A survey of 16 – 20 year olds in the UK and Wales.

amounting to domestic violence, whilst 50% of them had experienced at least one of the signs of domestic violence.<sup>2</sup>

21. Some children are learning about sex and relationships through explicit and harmful images, as adult pornography and sexualised imagery of children and young people is more available to today's young people. YouGov's "Sex Education" survey for channel 4 in 2009 found that 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 say they need more sex and relationships education. Pornography is cited by a significant number of young men as their principal source of information concerning sex and relationships.
22. The national British Crime Survey (BCS) suggests that 29% of those over 16 who had experienced domestic abuse in the previous year stated that their children had been aware of what was going on during the last incident of violence. Children were more likely to be witnesses to violence against women who had suffered repeated violence: 45 per cent of these women said their children were aware of the last incident. Other research shows that if children are present in the home, 90% will have either directly or indirectly witnessed the violence (Hughes, 1992).
23. Children can be affected in many different ways, and there are no set signs or patterns. However, most children will experience fear and disruption in their lives. Many will be affected physically and emotionally, in their learning and in their personal development. Research shows that children who have witnessed domestic violence often have similar symptoms and problems to those children who had been physically abused.
24. Children's cognitive abilities and academic performance are also often affected by their experiences of living with violence (including domestic violence). In some cases children who are affected by violence can be high academic achievers. However, the majority of children affected by violence do not perform well in schools. One study found that children who had recently left violent situations and were currently residing in refuges, showed significantly lower levels of competence on a number of parameters, including school performance, than children from a comparison group (Wolfe et al. 1986), with younger children being particularly affected (Rossman, 1998). A small scale study in America (Montminny-Danna, 1997) compared children living with violence at home with a control group, and reported below average school performance in the children from violent homes, a doubled rate of absence from school, and behavioural problems observed in class.
25. Domestic violence also raises concerns about child protection. Research shows that in 40 – 70% of cases where women are being abused, the children are also being

directly abused themselves (Stark and Flitcraft, 1996; Bowker et al. 1998). Domestic violence is present in two thirds of cases of child deaths and serious injury (2003-05 *Biennial Analysis of Serious Case Reviews*)

26. An estimated 6,500 girls are at risk of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) within the UK every year. FGM can lead to short and long term physical damage including immediate fatal haemorrhaging, extensive damage of the external reproductive system and complications in pregnancy and child birth. In addition to these health consequences there are considerable psycho-sexual, psychological and social consequences of FGM. The justifications given for the practise are multiple and reflect the ideological and historical situation of the societies in which it has developed. Reasons cited generally relate to tradition, power inequalities and the ensuing compliance of women to the dictates of their communities (<http://www.forwarduk.org.uk/key-issues/fgm>).
27. The sexual exploitation of children and young people takes different forms. It ranges from them being given accommodation in return for sexual activities through to being exploited through more 'formal' exploitation. The pain of children's experiences can show itself in self-destructive behaviour such as self-mutilation, overdosing, eating disorders and crime. While the average age range at which children are most vulnerable to sexual exploitation is 13 to 15, service providers report working with boys and girls as young as 10 and 11 who are known to have been sexually exploited. In 2004 the Home Office report "Paying the Price" noted that available research suggests up to 5000 children in England & Wales may be exploited in prostitution at any one time, with a female to male ratio of 4:1.
28. Item 2.7 in 'Paying The Price' 2004;
  - Prostitution can mean the exploitation and abuse of children. The nature of this form of child abuse means that it is particularly difficult to quantify. Much of the available information comes from small-scale studies, although estimates of prevalence vary, they indicate that the numbers involved have increased in recent years. It is suggested that in Britain up to 5000 young people may be involved at any one time, with a female to male ratio of 4:1. Research commissioned by the Department of Health shows that children are known to suffer this form of abuse in 111 (of the 146). Area Child Protection Committee districts – an average of 19 girls and 3 boys in each area.<sup>9</sup>  
  
([http://www.barnardos.org.uk/what\\_we\\_do/our\\_projects/sexual\\_exploitation.htm](http://www.barnardos.org.uk/what_we_do/our_projects/sexual_exploitation.htm).)
29. An NSPCC prevalence study in 2000 found in total, 16% of children under the age of 16 experienced sexual abuse during childhood. Cawson, P. et al. (2000) *Child maltreatment in the United Kingdom: a study of the prevalence of child abuse and*

*neglect*. London: NSPCC. p.85. However, overall girls are affected nearly twice as much as boys: 11% of boys aged under 16 compared to 21% of girls aged under 16 experienced sexual abuse during childhood. (Cawson, P. et al. (2000) *Child maltreatment in the United Kingdom: a study of the prevalence of child abuse and neglect*. London: NSPCC. p.85.

30. Three-quarters (72%) of sexually abused children did not tell anyone about the abuse at the time. 27% told someone later. Around a third (31%) still had not told anyone about their experience(s) by early adulthood. (Cawson, P. et al. (2000) *Child maltreatment in the United Kingdom: a study of the prevalence of child abuse and neglect*. London: NSPCC. p.83.)
31. Rape is a form of VAWG which disproportionately affects girls over women. More than one third (37%) of all rapes recorded by the police are committed against children under 16 years of age. Home Office Statistical Bulletin (2008 /09).
32. Whilst it is not possible to place a figure on the number of forced marriages that take place in the UK at any one time, it is important to note that girls and young women are vastly more affected than boys and young men (Bristol University, 2009). When a child or young person under 18 is forced into a marriage or subjected to abuse or threats to attempt to force them into a marriage, or abducted or subjected to attempted abduction for the purposes of forcing them into marriage, this is a form of child abuse. Specialist services on forced marriage support schools when they receive a request to advise them on how to approach a case of forced marriage, but such piecemeal responses will not provide standard and holistic responses. Schools need to be aware and trained in Government guidance as an example of shared good practice.
33. Many young women find themselves in situations where they can protect themselves from a possible forced marriage by escaping from their parents' home but at the cost of their academic careers, due to lack of continuing finance. Many survivors of forced marriages find themselves in a very difficult situation (often leaving them in serious emotional turmoil due to loss of contact with their [birth] family) and find themselves in a situation where they have to abandon academic pursuits due to lack of financial assistance.
34. The situation is exacerbated for young girls of less than 18 years and in full-time education, as the availability of state welfare benefits for them is minimal. In many cases, access to higher education may be the way to empowerment and may be an exit route from the cycle of abuse. <http://www.nawp.org/consulAndResearch.htm>. Forced Marriage Civil Protection Bill: Response to the consultation amendment to the Family Law Act, March 2007).

35. Some communities consider that the reputation or “honour” (sometimes called other things, such as “izzat”) of the family or community is held by the women and girls. The notion of “honour” also includes a sense of entitlement by male family members over female family members and an accompanying sense of justification to use violence to enforce that entitlement or to punish a women or girl for failing to meet their wishes. This is something that domestic abusers from all cultures seem to believe, in ways that vary according to cultural context, rather than being confined to specific cultures. This abuse can be physical, emotional and sexual and can lead to death. ([http://www.gldvp.org.uk/C2B/document\\_tree/ViewACategory.asp?CategoryID=72](http://www.gldvp.org.uk/C2B/document_tree/ViewACategory.asp?CategoryID=72). “Proposed procedures for safeguarding children affected by domestic violence”)

## The role of schools

36. Schools should tackle violence against women and girls:
1. Through a whole school approach, by developing practice on VAWG that includes creating a strong ethos of respect exemplified by staff behaviour and leadership, and is made clear throughout relevant policy and procedure.
  2. **Prevent** violence against girls and young women by creating an environment that challenges rather than tolerating it and teaching boys and girls to build respectful relationships. Work in schools should include working positively with young men and young women. They should also explicitly include the issue within PSHE Education when exploring the concept of relationships.
  3. **Support** girls and young women experiencing violence, discrimination and sexual bullying by:
    - a. acknowledging, identifying and intervening in violence against girls and young women;
    - b. engaging and working in partnership where possible with parents/carers
    - c. ensuring that staff are aware of signs and symptoms and alert to them;
    - d. providing support for them directly through its pastoral role and securing effective referral to appropriate facilities and services, for example counseling services;
    - e. working in partnership with specialist and generalist support services; and
    - f. prominently displaying information about advice services, such as Childline, in public and private spaces in school.

37. Through the co-location in schools of health, social and family-support services schools are increasingly becoming places of safety for mothers to seek support and information about where they can get help if they are being victimised.
38. As DCSF noted in the VAWG consultation document, schools have a crucial role to play, alongside parents and carers, in helping children and young people to develop respectful relationships, manage their emotions, and challenge the way in which some young men behave towards young women. Schools' existing statutory duty to develop and implement a behaviour policy, an anti-bullying policy and a gender equality policy gives a strong context for schools to develop their important preventive role in ending violence against women and their role in supporting girls and young women experiencing violence. This work will also contribute to the fulfillment of schools' and local authorities' duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

## Headline Recommendations

39. The group has agreed on nine high priority recommendations (below):
  1. DCSF policy lead to take responsibility for VAWG
  2. Initial and ongoing training programme for teaching and non-teaching school staff and governors
  3. Statutory guidance for schools on how to address issues relating to VAWG.
  4. VAWG to be addressed through the curriculum
  5. Pupil led VAWG audit tool
  6. Pathway for identification, referral and support
  7. National campaign
  8. Parent survey, support and guidance
  9. Further research

## Rationale for and explanation of recommendations

### **Recommendation 1: To establish a DCSF Policy lead to take responsibility for VAWG.**

40. VAWG is an important issue that needs a dedicated person or team within the DCSF to ensure that the department's work reflects national and international legal obligations as well as Outcomes and Aims included in initiatives such as Every Child Matters and the Well-being agenda specifically with regard to VAWG issues. The VAWG Advisory Group recognises the support of the Anti-Bullying and other policy teams contributions to the work of the group. However, it became apparent that not having a dedicated policy team within DCSF will significantly hinder the progress DCSF should make in ensuring DCSF's agencies, local authorities and schools fully incorporate VAWG into their policies.
41. The Group recommends that DCSF establishes a policy team to take responsibility for VAWG as a matter of urgency whilst ensuring that the new staff member/s have adequate expertise and understanding of the issues and track-record of working on VAWG.
42. This recommendation needs to be considered by the DCSF, the QCDA and schools

### **Recommendation 2: Initial and ongoing training programme for teaching and non-teaching school staff and governors**

43. School staff report that they do not have the skills or confidence to address gender equality and VAWG, and that they still find it difficult to deal with safeguarding issues, despite progress in this area. Staff and school's governors need to be aware of the significant impact of gender on experiences within school; how to identify and address aspects of school, youth and public culture which discriminate against women and girls, facilitate sexual bullying or encourage people to justify gender inequality, bullying and harassment. We believe there is a need for a greater emphasis in initial teacher training and continuing professional development and guidance for school governors on wellbeing issues in general, of which an awareness of sexism and the form and prevalence of VAWG should form an important part.
44. School staff need training relevant to their role, both through initial/ introductory training and CPD. We recommend that:
  - All school staff need to have training on gender equality and safeguarding children (including the identification and referral of girls affected by all forms of VAWG, including grooming and child sexual exploitation);

- Staff, teachers and support staff who teach PSHE or Citizenship will need specialist training and ongoing support on how to address these issues through the curriculum, e.g. a specific module could be developed as part of existing PSHE CPD;
  - Governors and head teachers have statutory obligation to address gender equality and VAWG issues and therefore need to be supported and trained;
  - Local authorities provide training in child protection and safeguarding that includes issues related to violence against women and girls;
  - That school staff are trained in the impact of technology on violence against women and girls (eg so called “sexting”, grooming, child sexual abuse and sexualised images of children and young people on line).
45. These recommendations need to be considered by the DCSF, the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA), schools and Local Authorities.

### **Recommendation 3: Statutory guidance for primary and secondary schools to address issues relating to VAWG.**

46. Evidence suggests that a significant proportion of schools are currently failing to comply with equality legislation, including the Gender Equality Duty. Bristol Fawcett Society issued a Freedom of Information request to all primary and secondary schools in a local authority asking if they had developed a Gender Equality Scheme (which is the key requirement of the Gender Equality Duty). Results showed that only seven primary schools and one secondary school had developed a Gender Equality Scheme. Two of the seven Primary school schemes only had actions points relating to boys (none on girls). Five secondary schools sent copies of their equal opportunity policy, demonstrating a lack of understanding as to what was required under the Gender Equality Duty.
47. Young people (both boys and girls) are experiencing sexual harassment and bullying in schools in England. The DCSF’s 2007/08 exclusion data shows that 120 secondary pupils were permanently excluded from school for alleged sexual misconduct. Womankind research in schools has found that young women and girls are regularly experiencing emotional and physical abuse in the form of sexual bullying. Young women and girls are called sexually derogatory names, inappropriately touched and harassed by young men and boys in the school. Womankind has talked to young people who do not feel that the teachers in the school take these actions and behavior seriously enough. A school culture where violence against women and the attitudes underpinning it is a normal part of everyday life for many is unacceptable.

48. Furthermore, the UK is obliged under international law under the United Nations (1995) Beijing Platform for Action and Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) to train school staff on gender equality and VAWG. There is robust evidence which suggests teachers do not feel confident and informed to challenge the discriminatory attitudes and behaviours that underpin VAWG. Teachers should therefore be given a much greater level of support and guidance to do this.
49. We recommend that the DCSF issue statutory guidance for schools, in order to raise the profile of the issue and to help schools implement effective policies and procedures. We recognise that schools are bombarded with initiatives but this guidance will clearly link the role of schools ending VAWG to all the existing initiatives that they currently meet. It will help schools to understand VAWG and place it within their existing school priorities. There is a broad range of ways in which schools can help prevent and deal with the effects of VAWG, some of which will not be obvious to schools. The new guidance should be comprehensive, including for example (but not exclusively): how to address VAWG in the school Gender Equality Scheme; behaviour and anti-bullying policies; in safeguarding strategies; in the wider curriculum; in the ethos of the school; staff training; equality in school leadership in the services and information that schools provide; and the school's responsibilities towards its employees, a significant number of whom may be perpetrators or victims of VAWG.
50. The DCSF, OfSTED and Local Authorities should show leadership by raising the profile and priority of VAWG and gender equality. The implementation of the guidance and of existing duties (including the gender equality duty) should be monitored, and resources should be allocated to this. Local authorities should be enabled to monitor progress in schools in implementing the duty, with OfSTED measuring progress as an indicator of a school's contribution to well-being, equalities and human rights.
51. This recommendation needs to be considered by the DCSF, OfSTED and the Local Government Association.

**Recommendation 4: VAWG to be addressed through the primary and secondary curriculum (across all subjects including PSHE Education, Citizenship and SEAL programme)**

52. Good work has been developed on VAWG in some schools. This work includes relevant lessons in PSHE Education, Citizenship and across the curriculum, assemblies, within other activities in school and across its extended services. However, this needs to be prioritised and applied more widely across schools (both primary and secondary) and more consistently within schools.

53. The Group recommends that gender equality and VAWG should be incorporated in all subjects including the programmes of study for personal wellbeing and social economic and financial capability. In addition, a module on VAWG should be developed as part of the SEAL programme.
54. Beijing Platform for Action (1995), point D/118 identifies sexualised and/or glamourised images in the media that incite violence against women, in particular those that depict rape or sexual slavery as well the use of women and girls as sex objects, including in pornography and prostitution, as factors contributing to the continued prevalence of such violence [against women and girls], adversely influencing the community at large, in particular children and young people.
55. The Group therefore recommends that media literacy should be included in school curricula with explicit reference to the stereotyping and objectification of women and girls in much mainstream media, including youth culture media such as games consoles, music videos etc.
56. We also recommend that PSHE Education become a compulsory part of the curriculum, which Ministers have already indicated is their intention. It is very important that SRE starts early in primary schools in order to tackle VAWG, and sexual exploitation and abuse of all children. Children need to learn the names of their body parts, personal boundaries, what is wrong and against the law. They need to know what to do about inappropriate touching or other forms of abuse, including being filmed or encouraged to watch pornography etc. If we do not equip children with this knowledge and the skills and permission to act on it with readily available and appropriate support, they will not know how to behave appropriately, and will not feel enabled to report abuse.
57. The Group recommends that the DCSF commission guidance for schools to support effective teaching and learning to prevent VAWG across the curriculum. This guidance should pull together illustrative material of good practice on prevention, intervention and awareness raising. Once produced, this should be disseminated widely through Teachernet, PSHE Association, Sex Education Forum, Healthy Schools Programme, National Behaviour Strategies, National College of School Leadership and other stakeholder agencies.
58. This recommendation needs to be considered by the DCSF, the QCDA, schools, and local authorities.

### **Recommendation 5: Pupil-led VAWG audit tool as part of a broader policy on gender equality.**

59. The DCSF should commission the development of a pupil-led audit tool which would involve pupils working with staff to review and evaluate current provision, assess need, develop policy, and develop and implement a whole school approach which is monitored and evaluated. The involvement of pupils is key to ensuring that need is fully assessed and that the school's policies and practices reflect and meet their needs. Examples of audit tools with a strong emphasis on the involvement of young people include the SRE toolkit 'Are you getting it right?' developed by the Sex Education Forum and the Bullying Audit Toolkit developed by the Anti-Bullying Alliance.
60. This tool should be promoted as a means with which to develop a Gender Equality Scheme as required by the Gender Equality Duty (2007). Senior leadership in the school should support and implement recommendations from the audit, and it could inform school improvement plans.
61. Opportunities for gathering information from pupils about how safe they feel should be explored. We note that NFER and TellUS 4 survey does not currently include reference to VAWG and other equality issues and would recommend that VAWG issues be included in future surveys.
62. This recommendation needs to be considered by the DCSF, the QCDA, the EHRC and schools.

### **Recommendation 6: Pathway for identification, referral and support**

63. There is a need for a clear route for identification, referral, and support of girls affected by VAWG. Schools and their partners in other services must ensure that these routes are in place, fit within existing school structures and policies, and are known by teaching and non-teaching staff, and that students know where to go for help. Without these conditions, girls will not receive the support they need, and staff will not feel confident to ask questions that could lead to disclosure.
64. Early intervention with boys who are identified as perpetrators of VAWG is essential in order to send clear messages that violence is unacceptable, promote a safe school environment and prevent escalation. School staff have a responsibility to recognise conduct that is serious and/or criminal and to refer boys to appropriate services as outlined under child protection procedures and criminal law.
65. Regarding sexist or discriminatory conduct which is not deemed to be a child protection issue or criminal, for example use of language or 'name calling',

interventions should include sanctions but the focus should be on positive action to promote respectful masculinities as an ideal and an aspired to practice. Schools should take pro-active action to transform disrespectful and abusive masculinities and empower boys and young men who reject sexism and VAWG.

66. We recommend that the upcoming DCSF consultation on an early intervention framework should explicitly include a question on the role of schools in identifying, assessing and supporting children affected by violence including sexual violence (whether directly or indirectly through adult violence). This recommendation should link into wider work of Government on ensuring adequate service provision, as in some cases there will be insufficient services for schools to refer onto.
67. We also recommend that guidance to schools makes it clear that responsibility for the overall strategy and implementation of the school gender equality scheme, and the support and referral of girls affected by VAWG sits with the school lead child protection officer. All staff have a responsibility to identify girls and young women who may be suffering violence, bullying and abuse. This should be built into child protection and safeguarding training for all staff.
68. The Child Protection Officer should promote the existence and contact details of services which are available at local and national levels by advertising them in a clear place so that they are accessible to children, young people and parents/carers.
69. This recommendation needs to be considered by the DCSF, Department for Health, local authorities and schools.

### **Recommendation 7: National campaign**

70. The VAWG Advisory Group welcomes the Home Office's intention to run a campaign aimed at challenging perceptions and attitudes which lead to violence within teenage relationships and acceptance of this, as the first phase in a broader cross-government communications strategy/campaign. We note that girls and young women are not only at risk from VAWG in their own intimate relationships however, but from family members, friends, predatory adults and strangers etc. Not wishing to detract from the focus of this campaign, we would advise that any resources provided include listing services for all forms of VAWG, thus meeting the needs of victims of all forms of abuse. The Advisory Group recommends that:
  71. The Home Office campaign should be an annual event, which should involve schools, and gives them the adequate time to prepare school activities.
  72. A specific campaign pack should be developed for primary and secondary schools which they can use to exemplify and build on issues arising from the national

campaign. To minimise the resource implications for DCSF and schools, the pack should provide ready-made materials for use through existing routes, for example lesson and assembly plans.

73. This recommendation needs to be considered by the DCSF and the Home Office.

### **Recommendation 8: Parent/carer survey, support & guidance**

74. Parents/carers bring up children and teach them their values, and most do this very well. We believe however that many parents/carers need support, and in some cases to be challenged, regarding VAWG and attitudes that underpin this. We need to give parents/carers information and support in their role in educating their children, enabling them to identify, support and protect girls who may be at risk of violence at home or outside of school (including sexual violence, grooming and child sexual exploitation for example for the purposes of pornography or prostitution). We recommend that the DCSF and local authorities consider how to use the full range of universal and targeted parenting and family support programmes (for example Family Information Services, Parent Know How and Parent Support Advisers) and interventions (such as Parenting Orders and Family Intervention Projects), and include this in local authorities' parenting strategies.
75. Schools are well placed to provide support to parents/carers, and schools and DCSF should consider how they can do this. For example, they can run drop in sessions with domestic violence/ sexual health workers or host counselling services from locally based organisations, provide a private phone for emergency calls to helping organisations etc which are available to parents and carers.
76. This recommendation needs to be considered by the DCSF and Local Authorities, and should link into work being carried out by other Government departments who have a responsibility for children, especially the Department of Health.

### **Recommendation 9: Further research**

77. The DCSF, on request from the Advisory Group, undertook a rapid literature review on school-based interventions aimed at preventing VAWG. Within available timescales, little empirical evidence was found of the impact of specific programmes in reducing VAWG, largely because these are very short interventions and are often not studied or evaluated longitudinally, in many cases because funding is not available to undertake such follow-up research. However, the review found some rich qualitative information on process and implementation, and opinions and issues raised by those involved in delivery – which should be used in the development of future initiatives.

78. The Group strongly recommends that the current scarcity of empirical research should not delay the implementation of the other recommendations in our report, as children and young people have a legal right to information and support that will keep them safe and promote gender equality. The Group also recommends that examples of good practice should be collected by the DCSF, used in the development of policy and guidance, and shared with schools.
79. *The group recommends that further research should be commissioned* to ensure that an evidence base of best practice underpins future work. Government will need to identify the gaps in knowledge and use an appropriate methodology to ensure that findings can be translated into effective policy and practice development.
80. Evaluation should be built into new and existing school-based interventions; for example, a longitudinal study should be built into plans to make PSHE Education statutory and to include VAWG within it.
81. This recommendation needs to be considered by the DCSF, the QCDA and schools.



You can download this publication at  
[www.dcsf.gov.uk/consultations](http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/consultations)

Search using ref: DCSF-00281-2010

D16(8650)/0310

© Crown copyright 2010

The text in this document (excluding the Royal Arms and other departmental or agency logos) may be reproduced free of charge in any format or medium providing it is reproduced accurately and not used in a misleading context.

The material must be acknowledged as Crown copyright and the title of the document specified. Where we have identified any third party copyright material you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

For any other use of this material please contact the Office of Public Sector Information, Information Policy Team, Kew, Richmond, Surrey TW9 4DU or e-mail: [licensing@opsi.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:licensing@opsi.gsi.gov.uk).