

# Response to the Violence Against Women and Girls Advisory Group's Recommendations



# DCSF Response to the violence against women and girls advisory group's recommendations

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

VAWG issues relate to a range of DCSF policy interests such as aspects of the curriculum, pupil behaviour and family policies and safeguarding. The DCSF recognises the importance of having a policy lead responsible for coordinating VAWG issues across the Department as well as engaging with stakeholders. As a result, the Department will establish a policy lead with the responsibility for coordinating Departmental interests in VAWG issues, including sensitive issues such as forced marriage, honour – based violence, trafficking, prostitution and child exploitation. The policy lead will also coordinate the DCSF policy on schools' role in tackling other prejudice driven issues such as hate crime and homophobia.

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

The Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA) will strengthen the issues of gender equality and VAWG in initial teacher training (ITT) and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) of teachers and support staff, where they form part of the training for implementing the new PSHE curriculum in the context of delivering a balanced personal and social wellbeing programme of study. TDA is working on developing two routes for PSHE, a PGCE enhancement model and a specialised route. These will together with CPD provision over the period 2011 – 2015 support the up skilling of the new and existing workforce.

The TDA supports high quality ITT and CPD by means of the Teacher Training Resource Bank (TTRB) and CPD database, and will continue to work with relevant stakeholders on gender equality and VAWG to identify fresh resources and materials. There are already relevant materials included on the TTRB, Behaviour4learning and Multiverse websites that can be used by trainee or serving teachers.

Gender equality and related issues are already covered by the Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) standards and associated guidance. The TDA will consider whether the references

to gender equality covered by the QTS standards and associated guidance need strengthening when they undertake their review of professional standards this year.

School governors have a duty to promote the well being of pupils at their schools. The non – statutory guidance on VAWG, which is being produced for schools, will be publicised to school governors, local authority governor services and training coordinators through our Governors' communication channels. The guidance will also be featured in the Governors' Guide To The Law, which is distributed by CD – ROM to all school governors and available on – line. The next version of the Governors' Guide will be published in September 2010. The Department will also include VAWG issues and pupil well – being duty when it revises the National Training Programme for New Governors in September 2011.

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

DCSF will produce a produce new guidance to help schools both to prevent and respond to VAWG issues. The guidance will demonstrate how these issues can be addressed in relevant aspects of the curriculum. That would include PSHE and Sex and Relationships education, where there are particular opportunities to address such issues. The guidance will be an on – line document, with hyperlinks to other relevant DCSF guidance and documents about VAWG. The Department will actively promote this guidance to schools, using a range of communication channels

This builds on existing work by DCSF to include key messages about VAWG in advice to schools. For example, the Department's sexist, sexual and transphobic bullying guidance published in December 2009 provides practical advice schools on what they can do to prevent and tackle gender based bullying. Revised guidance on Sex and Relationships Education (SRE) will be published later this year, following public consultation, with a stronger emphasis on relationships than in previous guidance.

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

DCSF plans to include gender equality and VAWG in the programme of study for personal and social wellbeing when PSHE is made a statutory part of the National Curriculum in September 2011. As with other aspects of PSHE Education, schools will be encouraged to consider how they can call on outside organisations, including from the voluntary sector, to offer advice and resources to support teaching about this issue.

The Department's response to recommendation 3 above shows how we would help schools incorporate VAWG into other relevant aspects of the curriculum as a whole.

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

DCSF will consider how schools can implement a school based audit or self assessment (which will include pupils, parents, school staff and the wider school community) regarding their views on equalities and inclusion. This work will be part of schools' duty to promote equality under the new Equality Bill.

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

DCSF advises that every school should make clear that all forms of VAWG are a safeguarding issue, and ensure that all staff knows how to deal with girls they identify as being affected, including when to refer to the school's designated senior person for child protection.

DCSF will shortly publish a document on early intervention. This will address the school's role in supporting early intervention and in identifying where children and young people may have additional needs. Signs such as persistent absence, tiredness at school, poor presentation (amongst others) could point to neglect and stem from underlying issues such as violence including domestic violence within the home. The document will look at approaches to responding to such issues and help Children's Trust Boards to think through how they can improve on and articulate their early intervention arrangements as they work to develop their new Children and Young People's Plans. The document aims to generate debate around appropriate interventions by schools, with the support of partner agencies.

Department of Health: will ensure that services meet the needs of children who are victims of violence and abuse through new commissioning guidance to Primary Care Trusts on services for women and children who are victims of violence or abuse Department of Health will be considering the role of the NHS in developing and supporting care pathways in response to the forthcoming report from the Taskforce on the Health Aspects of Violence Against Women and Children

## **Recommendation 7: National campaign**

Although the Home Office can not commit to making the Teenage Relationship Abuse Campaign an annual event at this stage, it will work with DCSF and other stakeholders to consider widening the remit of the campaign if it is re-run in the future.

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

DCSF will consider how to publicise materials and messages through Family Information Direct providers, through universal and targeted parenting and family programmes and in revised local authorities' parenting strategies.

DCSF will include information in the revised local authority parenting and family support commissioning guidance (due to be circulated by the end of March 2010 in line with the commitment made in the Families and Relationships Green Paper) about support and signposting for parents of girls experiencing violence e.g. parenting programmes can ensure that parents have better communication with their children.

## **Recommendation 9: Further research**

DCSF welcomes the advisory group's recommendation to conduct further research into VAWG. The Department will look into conducting a longitudinal study to ensure that evidence base of best practice underpins future work.



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