Together we can end violence against women and girls

Young People's consultation response collated by NCB

May 2009

"Think for us as you would think for your own kids"

"We live in a violent society and everyone hardly bats an eyelid when anything happens, like a girl getting hit by her boyfriend. People just think she must have done something to deserve it. Schools should be teaching students and parents because most of the students learn their aggression from their families"

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If I tell one person they might tell lots of other people

Executive summary

Introduction

The Department of Health approached NCB to speak to young people on the public consultation taking place on Violence against Women and Girls. They recognised the importance of young people's participation. The Department of Health wanted to hear from young people aged from the 14-19 age range on specific areas of the consultation.

The primary aim of the consultation exercises was to obtain the views from young people on chosen themes within the Violence against Women and Girls consultation.

Methodology and Sample

Two methods of engagement with young people were used, these were face-to-face work with established groups and an online survey. The consultation included young people between the ages of 14 – 19 (and up to 21 for one group with learning difficulties) from a variety of backgrounds, geographical spread and ability.

There were 11 focus groups held in total. Nine groups were young people's in youth clubs, special interest groups, support groups, groups specifically targeting young people with specific needs and abilities.   These focus groups were run by their youth worker/community worker. Two focus groups were school based and were run by NCB staff. All the focus groups worked to the same questions (see Appendix B).

A list of all groups worked with can be found in section 2.2.

In total, 153 young people were consulted in the focus groups, 94 were girls (61%) and 59 (49%) were boys.

In total, 72 young people between the ages of 14 – 19 responded to the online survey. Around eight out of ten of them (79%) were aged between 14–17, and the majority were female (69%).

Findings from the focus groups and online survey

Drawing on the feedback from both the focus groups and the online survey, finding will be grouped under the following headings: healthy relationships and the roles of schools; social attitudes and their impact; responding to early signs and offering support; working with the criminal justice system; feeling safe; next steps and key messages.

Healthy relationships and the roles of schools

Both the focus groups and the online survey highlighted the lack of relationship education in schools. Young people across the focus groups and on line surveys expressed a desire for there to be more emphasis on making and maintaining healthy, positive relationships rather than just the more biological aspects of sex education, and that this should start from an early age. They also highlighted the lack of discussions on violence in general

and violence in relationships. They stressed this as another area where they felt more emphasis is needed in the school curriculum. They suggested a number of different ways that this could be done. Examples included drama work drawn from youth work experience, discussions in single sex groups as well as peer to peer models.

"We had it briefly in science, but that was not about relationships, it was just about body parts"

"I don't think the government or schools give enough information on these subjects. I think it is one of the areas that needs working on"

In relation to sexual bullying, this was seen as prevalent in schools and most of the young people felt that this was not being dealt with and that it was often "swept under the carpet". Young people expressed their feeling that many teachers were aware of the situation and did little to stop it or deal with it. Sexual bullying ranged from name calling to videoing and sending videos of young women being forced to perform sexual acts.

"Yes it's happening in the school but it's not dealt with or talked about, there is a sense of shame within the young people and teachers. The school needs to provide a safe environment for young people to discuss these issues cause is so hidden".

"Some of them [teachers] *don't give a damn"*

Some of the young people said that they were reluctant to take issues of violence and sexual bullying to teachers, and would prefer to discuss these with an independent counsellor or through peer to peer models such as peer mentors.

Social attitudes and their impact

Across the focus groups and the online survey, the majority of young people felt that the key messages being given to young people were that men were dominant and women subservient. They felt that both men and women were being encouraged to be highly sexualised however men and boys were given added status for their sexual behaviour and seen as being "players", were as women and girls were described as "hoes" or "sluts". The importance of being "thin, beautiful and sexy" was also key messages given to young women.

"Young men and women are encouraged to see girls as sex symbols and nothing more. Who cares if we're successful if we're not attractive too? Girls suffer from low self esteem thanks to the bombardment of perfect images they receive from the media, girls themselves believe that if they are not beautiful they are worthless"

"Women like really rough sex and say no when they mean yes, that slutty or ugly girls are less deserving of good treatment, that women want to get married and are interested in men's money, that good girls don't like sex."

In the online survey, there were young people who identified key messages about relationships including women and girls as being ones of "respect" and "treating them as you would want to be treated".

Young people across the online survey and focus groups again emphasised the importance of education in combating violence against women and girls, and many restated the lack of this in their formal educational experience.

"People need to be taught that hitting and calling people names is a bad thing from a young age, then when they grow up they will know that it is bad."

They highlighted the importance of family and community/religious leaders. Many stated that some of their key messages came from family and community and therefore felt that this was an important area to engage with in the desire to reduce violence against women and girls.

Young people highlighted the role of the media and the import role the media can play in challenging the images put to young men and women about relationships and ways of treating women and girls.

Mainly in the focus groups, but also mentioned in the online survey, were comments about why women and girls remain silent about violence. Some suggestions were shared about how to overcome this. Young people spoke about embarrassment, shame, family loyalty or weakness if they disclosed abuse to someone, as being key reasons why women and girls remained silent. Young people suggested more media and "speaking up" about abuse as ways to counteract the culture of silence.

Forced marriages and female circumcision were discussed in the focus groups and young people were all against these practices, seeing them happening more outside of the UK than within.

Responding to early signs and offering support

Across the online survey and focus groups, young people again highlighted the importance of education both in relation to being able to support friends as well as knowing where to get information about support services. Young people saw schools as being appropriate places to get this information, yet schools were failing to supply it.

When asked to consider what a good service that was supportive to young people who are victims of violence might be like, the young people identified several characteristics. These broadly included safe, friendly, comfortable, non-judgemental environment that is confidential and accessible. It would be staffed by women only who are friendly, well-trained professionals capable of offering counselling and support to women and children as well as offering information. Offering alternatives to just talking, like art or sport were also highlighted.

Again when exploring support, young people in the focus groups highlighted the desire for a counsellor or specialised trained person within schools that they could approach for support. They also highlighted peer to peer forms of support.

"Train young people as peer educators in violence against women, then young people can go to schools to deliver workshops to students. And that will be more effective because the students could relate to these young peer educators".

Working with the criminal justice system

This was only explored in the focus groups and looked at policing. Generally young people felt negatively towards the police and felt that they were not very approachable or helpful. Young people did offer ways that this could be made better such as: the police should respond immediately to someone reporting abuse; develop a better understanding of violence in relationships and more training on how to deal with young female victims of violence; to be more respectful, friendly and to listen more, and not so arrogant and aggressive; more culturally aware, have closer working relationship with community leaders and have a police force which is more representative of the community it polices; increase the number of female officers; have better punishment for perpetrators.

"They need to have more officers that look like the community they look after. Maybe if women saw officers that understood her culture she might trust them"

"The police should have more respect and listen more. They always speak down to you so when you're in trouble you don't really want to go to them. I think the community police should be the ones to deal with this because they don't have the bad reputation like the normal police so they can better deal with the community in a friendly way. Bring in more black police would help."

Feeling safe

Across the focus groups and online survey young people highlighted similar messages about what makes them feel safe or unsafe. The lack of streetlights, being alone and being in places where there were gangs of people or young people tended to make them feel unsafe, whereas being with friends, family or trusted individuals tended to make young people feel safer at night. Along with being with others, well-lit streets and being in places which they were familiar with left young people feeling safe.

"I feel unsafe when I don't know what to do if violence was taken place in my life whether it was home, school or with my friends"

"I feel safer if I'm with a group of friends in a well lit area."

Young people fed back mixed responses concerning the government proposal for a website focusing on safety. Many of the young people felt this was not the best use of resources and that they would not use it. A small minority of young people did however support the idea.

Next steps and key messages

The two key messages emerging consistently from young people across the focus groups and online survey is that they want clear feedback widely available on the consultation and the strategy. They made a number of suggestions on how this can be done, many of which linked to the media. The second message young people gave was, unsurprisingly, the need for more education in relation to violence against women and girls. Young people stressed the importance of there being a much greater emphasis on relationships education and discussions on violence against women and girls within schools, society and the media.

"They could let us know what they thought about our suggestions on the news so that all adults could see that we kids are not all bad."

"The government needs to put more funding for young people to explore the issues of violence against women and girls"

Conclusions and Recommendations from young people's feedback

The conclusions and recommendations below were based upon young people's feedback and supported by policy and research work conducted by NCB. Please note that while the focus groups were held with young people in schools and young people's recommendations focused mainly on schools and their community the recommendations should be read as also applying to further education (FE) colleges and alternative education providers (PRUs). This is particularly important since young people attending alternative education are often particularly vulnerable and there is a high incidence of sexual exploitation in the 16-19 age-group – many of whom will be attending FE.

Ensuring effective opportunities to learn about relationships in school

The lack of relationships education was a key theme throughout the focus groups and the online survey. Young people described this absence in school as a missed opportunity. It is therefore ***recommended that more emphasis be placed on relationships education in* schools** through the following recommendations:
:
- Relationships education starts in primary school and be built on, year by year, from primary to secondary school. Opportunities to discuss relationships issues also need to be available in post-16 learning.

- Discussions about violence be incorporated into the school curriculum.

- Single sex groups be used to discuss and explore issues related to relationships and violence. It is further recommended that follow up work be done in mixed sex groups which facilitate sharing about the discussions that took place in the boys and girls groups and opportunities for communication between the sexes.

- Discussions be ongoing rather than part of one off sessions.

- Learning about relationships in school incorporates information about the law

- Adequate funding is provided at a national level to resource this and schools must also show leadership in enabling teachers to take up training opportunities.

- Particular attention should be focused on this theme in teacher training.

- The education system is encouraged to seek out and learn from examples of good practice outside formal education structures, such as within youth and community work.

The school as an institution that promotes equality

Young people made suggestions about how the culture and systems in the school could be modified to better promote equality and thus address violence. We therefore recommend the following:

- All schools take a proactive approach to preventing and responding to sexual bullying.

- Young people play a central role in exploring how to educate and deal with sexual bullying.

- Schools give more attention to the promotion of positive female and male role models.

Expert help available for one to one support

Young people highlighted the need and desire for a specific person in schools or communities whose sole responsibility it is to support the emotional need of young people. We therefore recommended the following:

- Schools have a trained councilor or another appropriately trained professional on-site.

- That a multi-agency 'school health team' be developed in school and FE colleges.

- Support staff are offered essential and appropriate training to support them in their role and in referring young people to expert support.

- More promotion and education about support services and help lines be given to young people in schools and community settings.

Supporting parents and carers in their role

A key point highlighted through the consultation process was the important role that families play in the development of young people's beliefs and attitudes about violence. Parents and carers should be offered support in this role. The following recommendations are therefore proposed:

- Parents and carers are offered guidance in this role through the promotion of and learning from current successful programmes being delivered.
- Schools engage with parents and carers about the quality and implications SRE provision.

Community engagement

Young people mentioned religious leaders as important people to engage in discussions about violence. Acknowledging that religious and community leaders could have an important leadership role in talking openly about violence, positive relationship values and clarifying what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour, the following recommendations are made:

- Greater effort is to be made to engage with community and faith leaders in the movement towards combating violence against women and girls.

- Learning from communities that have made progress in developing a culture that supports healthy relationships and tackles violence needs to be shared.

Using the media

Many young people felt there should be a media campaign to spotlight the issues of violence against women and girls. It is therefore proposed that the government consider a wider media campaign to highlight the issues along with the support services in relation to violence against women and girls. This can be done through the following recommendations:

- A national media campaign be run that uses a social marketing approach to clarifying what is acceptable and unacceptable in terms of violence and addressing stigma by stimulating dialogue on this subject.

- More localised media campaigns are launched. Actively involve young people and community leaders in this level of campaigns.

- Prior to investing money in this proposal, more consultation be done to explore whether the proposed website would be the best use of funds to achieve the desired outcome. Should the government go ahead with this website, that alternative methodologies that are interactive and creative such as drama and music workshops should be developed alongside the website. It is further recommended that websites that are known to be used by young people are

encouraged to make more effective links to support services around violence against women and girls.

Working with the police

Young people expressed negativity towards the police and their experience of police. In order for police to be seen by young people as an active part of the solution in relation to violence against women and girls, the following recommendations are made:

- Further work be done to build trusting relationships between the police and young people.

- Learning be drawn from the positive examples of community policing. The Safer Schools programme provides scope for further dialogue between young people and the police.

Ongoing partnership work with children and young people

The importance of feedback is an essential part of any consultation process and young people highlighted this. There was a strong message of the importance of working in partnership with young people. The following recommendations are therefore proposed:

- Government to feedback to young people their response to the consultation on violence against women and girls and their strategy more widely.

- Government to encourage and support ongoing engagement and partnership working with children and young people in schools, colleges, communities and local and national government.

On their own - don't know who to tell
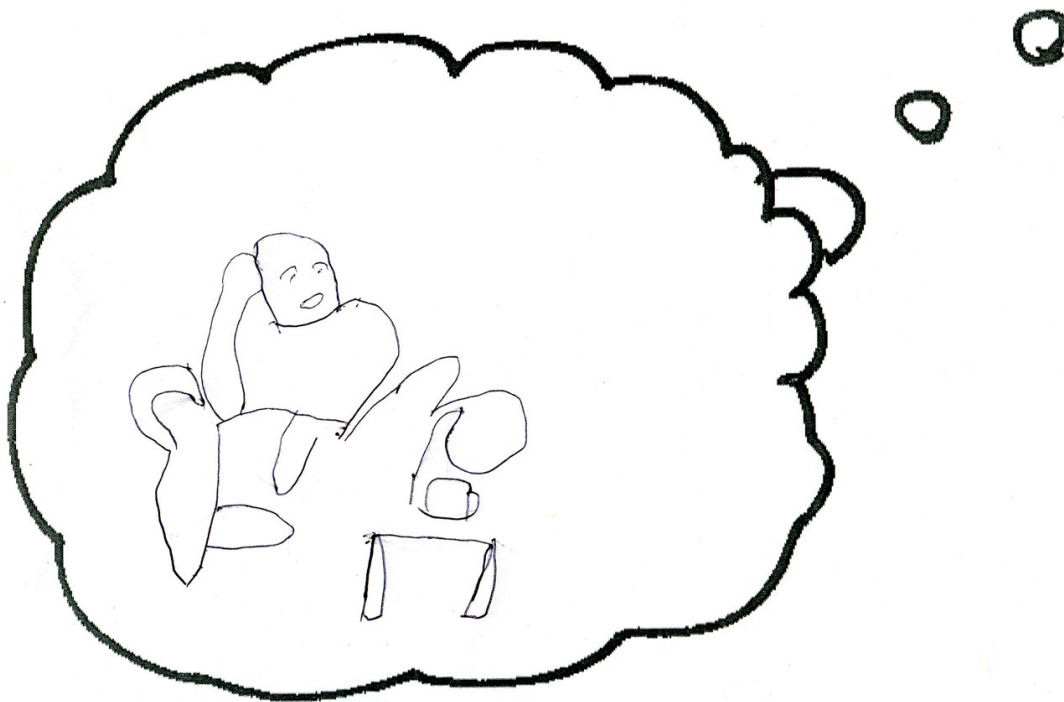
1. Introduction

The Department of Health approached NCB to undertake participation work on their behalf as part of a cross government consultation. They were aware that there were limited views from young people on the public consultation taking place on Violence against Women and Girls. At the same time they recognised the importance of young people's participation in the development of its work. They wanted to engage young people aged from the 14-19 age range on specific areas of the consultation.

1.1 National Children's Bureau (NCB)

NCB's vision is a society in which all children and young people are valued and their rights respected. We are dedicated to advancing their health and well-being across every aspects of their lives, and aim to achieve this through: reducing inequalities in childhood, ensuring children and young people have a strong voice in all matters that affect their lives, promoting positive images, enhancing health and well-being, and encouraging positive and supportive family and other environments.

As a membership and infrastructure support agency, participation and partnership are at the heart of everything we do. NCB hosts the many single-issue or single client groups, networks, fora, councils and partnership programmes that operate under our charitable status, and also provides essential information on policy, research and best practice across the sector as a whole. We reach, support and inform those working with and on behalf of children, their families and carers and, through our young member's scheme, Young NCB, children and young people themselves.

Working from an evidence-informed perspective and whether influencing policy, practice and service developments or undertaking high-quality research, NCB works collaboratively to ensure the best possible outcomes for all. We undertake around sixty projects each year ranging from children in care to children living with HIV or in youth custody, which enables us to truly claim that we cover every aspect of children's lives.

For further information, visit www.ncb.org.uk

1.2 Aims for the consultation

The primary aim of the consultation exercises was to obtain the views from young people on chosen themes within the Violence against Women and Girls consultation.

1.3 Objectives;

- To explain the content of the consultation on Violence against Women and Girls in a format which young people were able to understand, and in a sensitive format they could relate to.
- To agree the areas for young people to focus on. These included;
    - Healthy relationships and the roles of schools
    - Social attitudes and their impact

- Responding to early signs and offering support
- Working with the criminal justice system
- Feeling safe
- Next steps and key messages

- To link to support services available for young people for self referral if they were affected by undertaking the consultation
- To create participation and consultation tools that would engage young people from across England.
- To develop consultation sessions to allow existing groups to engage with as well as seldomly heard groups and individuals on specific areas of the consultation document.
- To undertake two consultations within a school setting
- To undertake an online youth survey that will be advertised among NCB's youth networks (i.e. Young ABA, Anti Bullying Alliance, Young NCB). We also linked to adult networks such as the Anti Bullying Alliance and PHSE network that have access to children and young people.
- To enable young people to have a voice and influence the developments of work on Violence against Women and Girls.
- To set up systems that will measure the effectiveness of the methods used to engage and involve young people in the consultations.

1.4 Proposed outcomes for the consultation

- Young people have an understanding of the Violence against Women and Girls consultation's aims and areas of focus.
- Young people have an understanding of the mechanisms for influencing and informing the work of government departments.
- Young people have evidence of influencing and informing government departments.
- Young people from a wide range of backgrounds/geographical locations across the country have an opportunity to participate in developments of the work on violence against women and girls.
- Young people are meaningfully involved in the developments of the work on violence against women and girls
- Government departments have improved awareness of their views on the specific consultation areas, and engagement with, young people.

2 Methodology and Sample

The following describes the methodology and tasks involved in planning the consultation:

2.1 Engagement and recruitment of participants

Two methods of engagement were chosen with young people; face-to-face work with established groups from around the country and an online questionnaire.

Youth groups were offered money for recruiting young people, undertaking the consultations and feeding back to us the findings. Young people who did the survey online were entered into a voucher prize draw.

Data collection tools were developed and produced including topic guides for focus group discussions and an online questionnaires/rating scales focusing on particular issues set out by the Department of Health. The consultation questions were based on the wider consultation areas and designed with the help of Young NCB members to ensure they were youth friendly to read.

Young people between the ages of 14 and 19 were recruited to participate in the consultation. Access to the individuals and groups were gained via youth group networks NCB supports or that they are linked to. As NCB is a membership organisation we also utilised the established relationships that NCB has with professionals who work with young people that may focus on some of the issues related to the consultation. Links were also made to stakeholder groups that the Department of Health have contact with.

When working with vulnerable groups NCB utilised their project workers to develop methods that will best engage them (i.e. young people who may have communications problems). Specialists were also engaged in the area of dealing with sensitive issues to ensure that we approach the area with sensitivity.

Support was given in sessions to encourage young people who found it hard to otherwise participate. For example, with one group money was offered towards transport cost to ensure their young people could attend the consultation meeting. All young people involved in the work were signposted to support services if the areas of the consultation brought up issues for them that need further support.

Although it was not be possible to bring together a representative sample of all young people from across the country, where possible, in the direct work with groups support workers were encouraged to include equal numbers of males and females, represent a range of ages and ethnicities and include respondents from the seldomly heard young people who may have experienced violence in their lives.

2.2 Focus groups

There were 11 focus groups in total. 9 groups were young people's groups which were in out of school settings – youth clubs, special interest groups, support groups, groups specifically targeting young people with specific needs and abilities.   These focus groups were run by the youth worker/community worker who runs the group. It was felt that this would be a useful method as the workers had already built up good relations with the young people which could support the information gathering. It also allowed for a greater number of young people to be consulted in a short amount of time.   The remaining 2 focus groups were school based and were run by NCB staff. All the focus groups worked to the same questions (see Appendix B).

There was a really good response from groups wanting to take part and the following varied groups were chosen to work with:

1. Action Against Domestic Violence, Newham, London
2. Peace makers, Oldham - 2 groups; one with young white men and women and one with young Muslim women
3. African Well Women's service, London - this group focuses on women who have been impacted by FGM, Forced marriages
4. Groundwork North Northamptonshire - a mixed group of young people
5. Hestia Project, North West London - focus on black and ethnic minority groups
6. Pulse Education, Islington, London - focus on groups of young people 17/18 involved in peer education project
7. Help to move on, Suffolk - working in Roman Catholic schools with young people affected by sexual abuse
8. Change, Leeds - focuses on young people with learning disabilities

The school groups included:

Highbury Grove School, Islington, London
MAC place, Falmer High School, Brighton

In total, 153 young people were consulted in the focus groups, 94 were girls (61%) and 59 (49%) were boys.

The ethnicity of all young people except one group was recorded. The break down of those received was as follows:
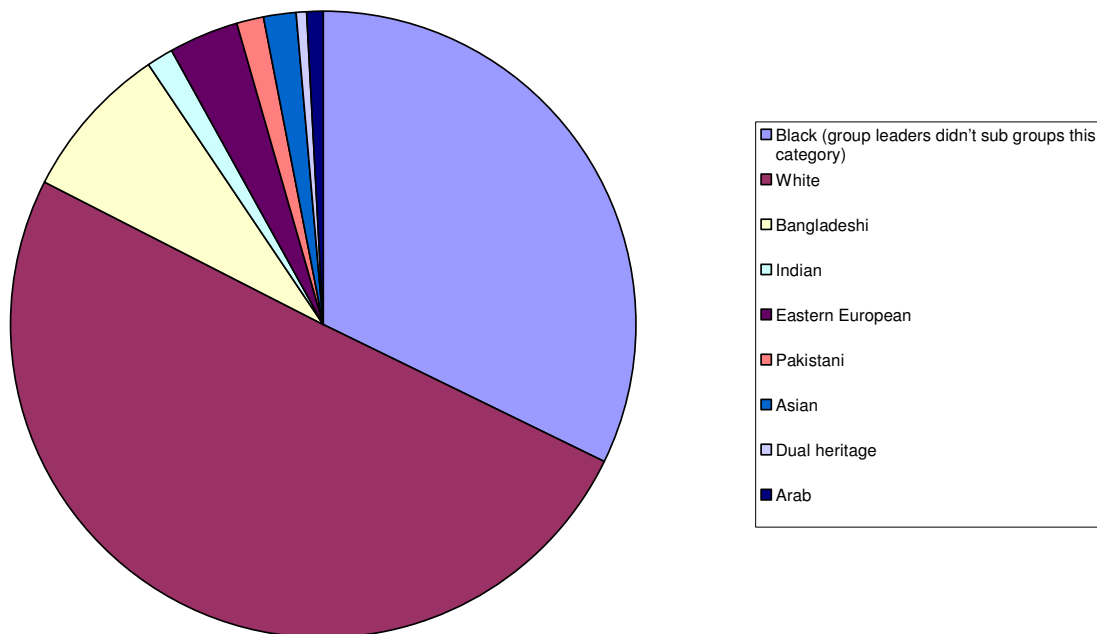
Black (the group leaders didn't sub groups this category) 44 young people (32%)
White – 69 young people (50%)
Bangladeshi – 11 (8%)
Indian – 2 (1%)
Eastern European – 5 (3%)
Pakistani – 2 (1%)
Asian – 2 (1%)
Dual heritage – 1 (0.5%)
Arab – 1 (0.5%)

2.3 Online survey

In total, 72 young people between the ages of 14 – 19 responded to the online survey. Around eight out of ten of them (79%) were aged between 14–17, and the majority were female (69%).

A large number of young people viewed the survey but a smaller proportion undertook it. The numbers in the survey were lower than expected. Following child protection guidelines young people were asked to share their email addresses to be able to offer support if any young person disclosed anything relating to the survey. On reflection this may have put some young people off of sharing their views via the online survey.

3. Defining participation

NCB has adopted and works within the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. As part of this commitment to the UNCRC, NCB promotes the importance of articles 12 which seeks to promote the engagement of children and young people in any decisions that will affect their lives.

The term participation covers a broad continuum of involvement in decisions; it is a multi-layered concept, involving many different processes (Kirby et al, 2003a; Sinclair, 2004). Boyden and Ennew (1997) state that there are different interpretations of the term 'participation'. It can simply mean taking part, being present, being involved or consulted. Alternatively, it can denote a transfer of power so that participants' views have influence on decisions.

> *'The purpose of participation is to ensure better outcomes for children themselves and also for the organisation and the wider community. Effective participation is likely to mean that the involvement of children actually leads to change (where they identify that change is needed)'* (Kirby et al, 2003)

It was noted by many of the young people from the focus groups that they appreciated the opportunity to feed into the consultation and thought it important that young people's voices were heard and taken into account. They felt the government should be engaging with young people more.

"The group was delighted to be able to help, and felt that it was great that their views could influence Government Policy, which ultimately would help shape their world and that of future generations".

"They should be listening to us. They work for us but they never listen to us".

4. Consultation feedback

The consultation feedback has been collated under 6 key themes. These are:

- Healthy relationships and the roles of schools
- Social attitudes and their impact
- Responding to early signs and offering support
- Working with the criminal justice system
- Feeling safe
- Next steps and key messages

The feedback from the online survey and focus groups will be presented under these key themes.

4.1 Feedback from the focus groups

As a framework to begin the focus groups, all groups began with an exploration of what young people understood by the term "violence against women and girls". Violence against women and girls was broadly understood by young people to be any form of abusive behaviour which causes harm. It was felt that violence against women could take many forms - physical, emotional/psychological or sexual, and was manifest in a broad range of different abusive behaviours including (in no particular order):

- physical – punching, kicking, inflicting physical pain, intimidation;
- verbal – shouting, name calling, spreading rumours, threats;
- sexual – rape, coercing women into having sex by using emotional abuse or drugs (date rape), sexist attitudes and insults, stalking;
- emotional – restricting their social life, isolating women and girls from friends and family, regulating their lives, such as what they eat and how they dress.

Some young people also described particular forms of violence targeted at women and girls, which were understood to be common in certain cultures, such as forced marriages and female genital mutilation. Although for many of the groups, these terms were often not understood and needed explanation. They also held the assumption that these were things that happened outside of the UK.

It was implicit in some young people's responses that they interpreted violence against women and girls as a method used by males to control, dominate and oppress them. It was however also acknowledged that some young women saw violence, especially in the case of sexual bullying, as being violence by girls towards girls.

"*A girl can get hit because she has her own opinions and her boyfriend don't like it. Lots of boys just hit girls because they don't like what they say.*"

"*Girls gossip about other girls and call them sluts and hoes. In fact there have been girls who have left the school because they got such a hard time*"

4.1.1 Healthy relationships and the role of school

4.1.1.1 Learning about relationships

The young people had learned about relationships from a variety of sources including (in no particular order):

- school;
- the media and celebrities;
- friends and family;
- their personal experiences;
- family planning centres, youth projects;
- books.

Generally, the young people were critical and felt let down by their schools. None were able to give an example where relationships had been taught well in school, and most agreed that schools were not doing enough to teach young people about this subject. Some had received Sex and Relationships Education, but relationships hadn't been addressed adequately during this subject, and in some cases, hadn't been covered at all. Some young people felt schools were a credible source of information for young people, and therefore, should be teaching them about relationships. Others were sceptical of their teachers' abilities to address this adequately.

"*They tell you what to do once you get into bed, but tell you nothing how to get there*".

"*We had it briefly in science, but that was not about relationships, it was just about body parts*"

The only positive examples alluded to during the focus groups were in youth work settings. One youth worker used drama to engage the young people who participated as characters in a mock TV chat show, similar to the Jeremy Kyle show that is broadcast on ITV. The young people found this to be an enjoyable, positive experience, which encouraged them to reflect on the relationships issues that were raised. It was also described as 'safe', as they did not need to discuss their own personal lives to engage in the session.

The other example also came from a youth work setting, "*Our youth club did a brilliant session on domestic abuse, we used song lyrics and looked at famous people who had lived with it (domestic abuse) – it made me feel like if it could happen to them it could happen to anyone. Our youth worker ran a 6 week session and at the end of it we could confidentially access a support group if we wanted to. When I went I was surprised to see 2 other club members there, we shared our problems but never told any of the other members cos we knew how hard it was to live with and wouldn't make the situation worse for each other.*"

It was also highlighted by one of the workers that in the case of young people with learning disabilities, the issue of relationships was not discussed because "*parents and professionals feel people with learning disabilities shouldn't have relationships. This means that some people with learning disabilities don't have a chance to think about what a 'healthy' relationship involves, and are more likely to experience violence in relationships.*"

4.1.1.2 Teaching about violence in relationships

Focusing more on violence in relationships, most of the young people felt that violence in relationships had not been appropriately addressed during school and that it should be covered in more depth. Some felt it would need to be discussed in a sensitive, neutral environment within the school and should be targeted at both sexes. It was suggested that teaching young people in schools about violence in relationships would help to counteract cultures where violence is acceptable and raise awareness of what is acceptable in a relationship. However, for some young people it was accepted that violence was an inevitable part of life and there was nothing that could be done to prevent it.

"*Things like this are always gonna happen, there's nothing you can do*"

Young people suggested that conversations about violence in schools could be done in single sex groups to enable young people to share more openly.

For some young people, school was not considered an appropriate context to discuss relationships, as they felt uncomfortable sharing personal information with school peers and teachers, who were perceived as judgemental.

"*There is no way I would discuss my feelings on violence in relationships in front of my snobby teacher who looks down her nose on us already cos of where we live and who we are, her life is nothing like mine and I wouldn't want her knowing any more than she has to about mine*"

There was also the suggestion from a number of the groups that having someone outside of the teaching staff to talk to would be beneficial.

Discussing violence in relationships was also felt to be difficult in school, particularly for young people who had experienced domestic violence due to the stigma attached to it. One young person, who had in the past suffered domestic violence, described their sense of shame and embarrassment when this subject was brought up during class. Although other young people talked positively about the support they had received from youth workers and alternative youth provision. These settings were described as confidential, and the staff empathetic and knowledgeable.

4.1.1.3 Sexual bullying

When exploring the prevalence and impact of sexual bullying, almost all the young people said they had encountered sexual bullying in their school. Although school reactions were mixed, a small number of young people felt their schools had strong anti-bullying procedures and dealt effectively with bullies. However, the majority were more critical, reporting that their teachers were often aware of sexual bullying, but either ignored it or failed to deal with it adequately. Some of the young people felt that this was sending a message to young people that certain forms of sexual bullying are acceptable.

Sexual bullying appeared to range from name calling, to more extreme examples, where girls were being physically abused in a sexual manner. It was reported by one group, that

a young girl had been forced to perform sex acts on a group of boys. This seemed common knowledge within the school, and the girl had done nothing regarding complaining because some of the boys had filmed the sexual acts and threatened to post it on an image sharing website if she did. Some of the other groups talked about instances where girls were being 'touched' inappropriately by boys.

Furthermore, instances of sexual bullying often failed to reach teachers, as some young people discussed the negative labels that are attached to those who 'snitch'. It was also suggested that disclosing sexual bullying to a teacher might be more traumatic than disclosing other kinds of bullying due to the nature of it.

"In my school it's serious but some boys still say things and grab you and touch you when you don't want them to. Sometimes you just can't be bothered to tell the teachers every time it happens because then you can sometimes end up being bullied by all their friends for snitching"

"Yes it's happening in the school but it's not dealt with or talked about, there is a sense of shame within the young people and teachers. The school needs to provide a safe environment for young people to discuss these issues cause is so hidden".

"Some of them [teachers] *don't give a damn"*

The pressure to maintain an acceptable reputation amongst peers was particularly strong for females, who were often afforded no sympathy if they were deemed to have invited the unwanted attention through a reputation for being promiscuous. This attitude extended to instances where girls can find themselves in vulnerable situations due to how they dress. The young people recognised that any form of sexual abuse was wrong, but felt that in certain contexts girls should take more personal responsibility for how they dress.

Peer support systems and lessons in schools that address sexual bullying were felt to be necessary by some young people. Some young people explained that they did not feel confident to challenge unacceptable behaviour due to fear of reprisals. Under supportive circumstances they said they would be more willing to challenge negative behaviours or beliefs.

Young people were asked to make suggestions of what they felt would help to challenge negative beliefs and behaviours, some of these included:
- media output which promotes respect and positive relationships;
- lessons in school which outline boundaries of acceptable behaviour, SRE included in the curriculum, education from an early age and peer groups to discuss issues;
- positive relationships between parents to act as role models for children;
- staff in schools who are independent and can be talked to confidentially;
- more services to support young people;
- more women in positions of authority and encouraging people to acknowledge that traditional gender roles have changed.

4.1.2 Social attitudes and their impact

4.1.2.1 Key messages given to young people

The young people felt that there are external pressures on boys and girls to behave in particular ways. Boys are expected to be dominant, aggressive and powerful. The young people described how males were being encouraged to be 'bad boys' and 'players', and to have particular consumer goods, which would give them status, such as cars, jewellery and designer clothing. In contrast, it was felt that women were expected to be weak, powerless and generally considered inferior to men.

Pressures on men, but particularly on women, were described as being highly sexualised. The young people felt that both sexes were encouraged to be promiscuous. Women were described as 'sex objects' and expected to 'skinny', as it is assumed that this is what men want. However, the young people felt this was contradictory, as mentioned above; promiscuous women would be described in derogatory ways, while men would receive status for being promiscuous.

"A boy who sleeps around would be a 'pimp' [a term used positively] *and a girl would be a 'ho'* [a term used negatively]. *So if a pimp gets with a hoe, then he would gain respect and there would be no damage to him, but her reputation would be damaged and potentially open her to unwanted sex that some would say she deserved"*.

Some young people felt that celebrities set a bad example to young people, as they behave badly but are successful, "*on TV it's all about being hot and sexy for a girl, and aggressive and sexy if you a boy. It actually teaches you to be a player"*.

It was suggested that because of these pressures, some young people believe that it is okay to physically abuse girls.

On reflection of where these ideas come from, young people felt that they were ubiquitous and emanate from various sources:
- media – in TV shows and dramas, music videos, particularly in Rap and Hip Hop, advertising, internet video sites like You Tube, video games, magazines and from celebrities – *"Look at the rap music that boys listen to, especially black gangsta rap, the call their women hoes (whores) and speak in a way that brings women down. Magazines use men for sporting adverts and women for glamour shots which makes you think men are strong and fit and women if not size zero and fit are worthless." K aged 16*
- friends, family – from father to son - *"My dad hit my mum and then my brother hit his girlfriend when she was pregnant cos she went out with her mates and he thought this was disrespecting him."* ;
- in particular religions or the misinterpretation of those religions;
- cultural attitudes and society in general.

4.1.2.2 Ways of reducing violence

The young people suggested a variety of ways to reduce violence. Most young people felt education was important, and schools were suitably placed to perform a role in reducing violence against women and girls. They proposed using education to communicate that violence is not acceptable, to build girls' self-esteem and encourage them to value themselves. Parents and family were felt to be important role models for children, and therefore should respect each other. Respecting others was also something that children and young people should learn about while in school.

Other proposed measures to reduce violence were:
- positive media output – TV shows, documentaries and advertising that raise awareness, promote sources of support and ethical behaviour;
- reducing the numbers of sexualised images of women in mainstream media output and more role models promoting positive images and behaviour;
- victim support groups and phone lines;
- Religious leaders to promote the idea that violence against women and girls is not acceptable;
- women and girls who are victims of violence to be better protected by the law and kept safe, and the courts to issue harsher sentences to offenders;
- police officers better equipped to deal with violent offences;
- more training for youth workers and teachers to help them identify signs of abuse.
- teachers taking the situation of sexual bullying more seriously

4.1.2.3 Remaining silent about violence

The young people felt there were many pressures and barriers that might lead women victims to remain silent following abuse. Some felt that women victims might experience feelings of embarrassment, shame or weakness if they disclosed abuse to someone. They may have a strong emotional attachment to the perpetrator and not want to leave or lose them, or might be worried about betraying or shaming their family. Cultural barriers and pressures were felt to be quite important, as some young people felt that particular cultures prevent women from speaking out. Language may also be a barrier.

"There is a great sense of silence within certain communities and girls have accepted the silence because she doesn't want to bring shame on the family and for those who break the silence are stigmatised by the community and family, but whether these girls/women are silent or not there's a great deal of loneliness and rejection"

Other barriers included:
- fear of reprisals from the perpetrator, or information about the women or girl being put on the internet – *"they might be scared";*
- no informal support network, as often perpetrators isolate women from friends and family;
- services and support groups may not be accessible or available, leaving victims with no where to go and no one to talk to;
- victims may not be placed in a safe environment after disclosing abuse to the authorities;

- fear of not been taken seriously or accused of lying, particularly if the perpetrator is 'respectable' or occupies a powerful position – *"People might think they are lying or making it up"*.

To challenge some of these, the young people felt that media campaigns would be effective and posters and leaflets should be available in schools and community settings. There should be more services, support groups and safe houses for victims of violence. The government should also be more vocal around this issue. Some young people felt it was important to instil confidence in women and girls.

4.1.2.4 Forced marriages and female circumcision

It was evident that the young people's knowledge of forced marriages and female circumcision in particular, was limited. Some of them explained that they didn't fully understand these practices and felt it was important to learn more about them. Some young people were aware that forced marriages happen in the UK and elsewhere, and felt that it was most common for women, rather than men, to be forced into marriage.

"We don't ever really hear about female circumcision in this country; don't think it happens over here".

"I think it [forced marriages] *happens everywhere. Some people are forced to marry a man because he has money. That could happen if you're black, white, Indian, whatever".*

One group of young people discussed the significance of identity loss for those women who do not undertake circumcision. However, most young people had no knowledge of this practice. Some felt it was far more common in African states than in the UK.

All the young people felt forced marriages and female circumcision were wrong; however, some felt it would be difficult to challenge other people's cultures and beliefs. They felt that it was important to work with religious leaders and ensure that all religious faiths actively condemn forced marriages and female circumcision. They also suggested tougher laws and sentencing for perpetrators, more education and awareness rising of these issues, and more work with families and parents.

4.1.3 Responding to early signs and offering support

4.1.3.1 Offering support to a friend

Many of the young people said they would support a friend or someone who told them they had been a victim of violence in a number of ways. Some young people reported that they would comfort them, talk to them about it and offer them somewhere to stay or financial help. If the perpetrator was a boyfriend or husband, some said they would encourage the person to end the relationship or stand up to them. Others said they would urge the victim to tell someone, like their parents, a teacher, youth worker, a professional or the police. While some of the young people said they would consider using informal methods to enact revenge, such as having the perpetrator beaten up. Young people also identified possible ways that they could support one another.

"Train young people as peer educators in violence against women, then young people can go to schools to deliver workshops to students. And that will be more effective because the students could relate to these young peer educators".

In some of the discussions it was suggested that teachers and the police are not always very helpful and that more support should be available for young victims.

Some young people also discussed the difficulties of disclosing violence and trying to seek support. This may lead to social services becoming involved and the family breaking up, or the perpetrator committing more violent acts in revenge. One group highlighted the strain this might place on friendships, particularly if the victim had asked them not to say anything.

"If my friend told me, and told me to keep it a secret then I wouldn't be a good friend if I told someone what she said".

"I would get into even more trouble if I told my mum that I had a boyfriend let alone telling her that he hit me."

4.1.3.2 Support services

The young people suggested that there should be more places for victims to go and stay, where they can access support and advice confidentially. They felt more support groups as well as group therapy and free counselling sessions should be available for victims. Some suggested that a peer education and support programme in schools would help. Other suggestions were self-defence classes, free phone lines, and prison sentences for offenders. One young person talked about the importance of having support and understanding in the family home.

When asked to consider what a good service that was supportive to young people who are victims of violence might be like, the young people identified several characteristics. Some of these included:
- a safe, comfortable, non-judgemental environment that is confidential;
- suitably located and discreet so it is not obvious what it is;
- staffed by women only who are friendly, well-trained professionals capable of offering counselling and support to women and children;
- offer alternatives to just talking, like art or sport;
- provide accommodation, resources like personal alarms and crisis money, and play facilities for children; and,
- have flexible opening hours.

It was suggested that these services should be promoted through some of the following:
- leaflets;
- the media;
- youth groups and school;
- in women's toilets and on women's health products.

4.1.3.3 Barriers to accessing services and how to overcome these

Many of the barriers that the young people identified that would hinder the service delivery to young people, were similar to those discussed previously, such as fear of reprisals, feelings of shame and attracting negative labels like 'snitch'.

"People don't want to get involved if they see a women being hit. Me and my friend saw this man hitting a lady but we were too scared to do anything".

To overcome these barriers, the young people felt education was important to teach girls to value and respect themselves and recognise that it is not their fault. One young person reported that some girls believe their boyfriends abuse them because they love them.

"Some of the barriers are shame because girls feel ashamed that their boyfriends beat them up and sometimes some girls like being beaten up by their boyfriends. I think to overcome this you need to teach girls what the word love really means and how to respect themselves".

Schools should advertise services to parents through school newsletters. Others suggested that the government should provide more funding and accessible services. One young person suggested that the government should launch a campaign encouraging people to 'snitch' on perpetrators, similar to that used to encourage people to report benefit cheats. Other suggestions were for professionals dealing with violence to provide home visits, and services to offer childcare to reach more women. Another was to offer support to victims of violence while they are accessing other services. This was felt to be more discreet and reduces the chance of people finding out.

4.1.3.4 School support services

Young people spoke of the importance within school settings of having independent people outside of the teaching staff to offer support and be a key point of reference in relation to violence and sexual bullying. These would be people who have specific training and skills to support the emotional health of students, such as counsellors. Young people also mentioned that having support units such as the one attached to Falmer School called MAC place which offers support groups and 1-2-1 support to students was helpful and a positive model to be replicated.

4.1.4 Working with the criminal justice system

4.1.4.1 The role of the police

The young people were quite critical of the police, both in the way they deal with violence against women and girls and their general conduct and attitudes.

"The police should have more respect and listen more. They always speak down to you so when you're in trouble you don't really want to go to them. I think the community police should be the ones to deal with this because they don't have the bad reputation like the

normal police so they can better deal with the community in a friendly way. Bring in more black police would help."

They felt that the police could do a lot to improve, including:
• provide an immediate response to someone reporting abuse;
• Give out rape alarms for girls;
• develop a better understanding of violence in relationships and more training on how to deal with female victims of violence;
• to be more respectful, friendly and to listen more, and not so arrogant and aggressive;
• more culturally aware, have closer working relationship with community leaders and have a police force which is more representative of the community it polices – "*They need to have more officers that look like the community they look after. Maybe if women saw officers that understood her culture she might trust them*";
• increase the number of female police officers – "*I think only police women should deal with this because sometimes police men are too arrogant and don't want to take things like this serious*";
• punish perpetrators and ensure the safety of everyone who reports being a victim – "*If they reported it and nothing happens to the abuser than it isn't fair. It could make the situation worse.*";
• ensure continuity for victims by maintaining contact with the same officer throughout;
• have better working relationships with social workers.

4.1.5 Feeling Safe

4.1.5.1 Feeling unsafe

Generally, the young people's fears can be categorised into particular behaviours that people exhibit, particular individuals that they encounter and certain environments and locations.

Some of the behaviours identified were rowdy or anti-social behaviour that is loud and intimidating. Some of the individuals that young people identified were people who are drunk, particularly youths; gangs of young people; young people wearing hoodies or carrying weapons; homeless people; drug dealers; people sat in parked cars or driving slowly past them while they walk; people of different ethnic backgrounds; and people walking behind them. Some of the environments and locations that left young people feeling fearful included areas with poor street lighting; parks; subways; poorly maintained bushes and trees; and run-down, deprived areas.

"There are too many gangs about and I don't want to get into any trouble".

"When a place is rundown and looks shit, people are more likely to be violent because they feel like they're not worth anything"

Other things that frightened the young people were: not knowing where to get help; knowing about sex offenders living in the area; fighting cats; strange noises; and media stories that exaggerate the level of threat.

"I feel unsafe when I don't know what to do if violence was taken place in my life whether it was home, school or with my friends"

4.1.5.2 Feeling safe

The young people mentioned many things that already make them feel safe, and suggested others that would make them feel safer in future, from immediate situational preventative measures to more long-term measures aimed at reducing crime.

- Improved street lighting and open planned spaces that are well maintained.
- Personal panic alarms and burglar alarms for houses.
- Greater police presence on foot patrols rather than in cars, and more 'responsible' adults, such as having conductors on buses.
- CCTV cameras – although some young people were sceptical of their effectiveness.
- Being in the presence of friends and with parents.
- Many felt safe at home and when they were somewhere familiar.
- Having a mobile phone and knowledge of the area they were in.
- Having a good relationship with the local police and youth work team.
- Attending sessions run by the police on staying safe.
- Providing all young people with things to do, aspirations and prospects for the future.
- Early intervention programmes and support for children and young people at home also made them feel safer.

"I feel safer if I'm with a group of friends in a well lit area."

"Spend money on making the community a nicer place to live"

4.1.5.3 Proposed government website

When asked about the government idea of a website where young people can report where and why they feel safe or unsafe, the young people's responses were mixed. The majority of young people, were critical of the idea and said they would not use it and did not think others would find it useful. Some young people did not have access to the Internet at home and felt that adults who are not very Internet savvy may struggle to use the site. There was also concern about the website's ability to alleviate young people's fears and problems. Some said that when they are fearful or have a problem they want someone to talk to and an adult that is physically present to help them. One young person said the proposed Internet site is the last place they would go to for help. Others felt the money would be better spent on local youth projects and facilities. Put in conclusion section

"I would rather see the detached youth workers on the street than money being spent on a website – if I feel unsafe I can contact a youth worker or the PCSO and they'll help, waiting until I get home to go on a website is not going to solve my fear" E aged 15

"Really bad idea – nobody will look at a website. More work should be done in schools".

"The last thing on my mind if I needed help would be to go to a website"

There was also some scepticism and suspicion from the young people regarding the website's ability to make a difference and its purpose. Some wondered whether the proposed website was merely a politically motivated scheme, rather than a response to an actual expressed need. There was also doubt cast over the infrastructure to support the website and its ability to effectively deal with the inevitable rise in complaints that would occur. A group of young people felt the website might be a victim of its own success. Others felt the website might anger residents of particular areas identified as crime 'hot spots'.

A smaller number of young people welcomed the idea of having a resource with local information on crime, and felt that young people and adults would use it. It was suggested that the website should be user-friendly, updated on a regular basis and secure, providing users with guaranteed anonymity. The site should also have a FAQ section, and all staff dealing with users' queries and reports should be UK based and have knowledge of the issues they are dealing with.

"Everyone would use the website as long as it is publicised well so people can finds out about it."

4.1.6 Next steps and key messages

4.1.6.1 Feeding back on the consultation

The key focus in this theme was young people's ideas of how the government could be feeding back on the consultation and the broader strategy. Young people felt this feedback was an important part of the process of the consultation. Young people suggested that the government should feedback on the consultation and proposed strategy through the media, including: TV, radio and Internet. Other suggestions were seminars and a young people-friendly report containing the main findings and policy proposals.

"A conference for young people organised by young people"

"They could let us know what they thought about our suggestions on the news so that all adults could see that we kids are not all bad."

4.1.6.2 Key messages to the government

Young people also had some key messages that they wanted to pass to the government. Many of the young people simply reiterated some of the points that have been raised already above. But overall, there was a clear message that they wanted the **government to continue raising awareness of these issues and working to combat violence against women and girls, and to provide more support to children and young people more generally**. They emphasised the importance of **educating children and young people about these issues** and giving them safe places to go with interesting things to

do. They wanted the **government to support parents and families and work to bring about a wider moral and cultural change towards violence**.

"The government needs to put more funding for young people to explore the issues of violence against women and girls"

"Spend more money to give us a safe place to be and interesting things to do"

"Give more support to kids in domestic violence without being scared that they will be taken into care. We just want things to be better"

"The Government should give credit to positive people whose lives have been changed by leaving the relationship"

"Don't just say be tough on crime – build some places where kids can go in the first place to prevent them from getting into crime because they bored."

4.2 Feedback from the online survey

As with the focus groups, to begin the online survey, all young people were asked to share there understanding of what violence against women and girls meant. There were a variety of responses and examples given to this question; but generally, violence against women and girls was understood to be any form of behaviour which causes them harm. The young people recognised that violence appears in various guises. It was described as being verbal, physical, emotional and psychological. The reasons and motivations for violence were numerous and there was recognition that it takes place in various contexts. It was also felt that violence would have an adverse affect upon women and girls that could be long-lasting.

4.2.1 Healthy relationships and the roles of schools

4.2.1.1 Learning about relationships

Young people were asked to reflect on where their main source of learning about relationships was from. The vast majority of information was seen to come from family, schools and friends. Below is a table which reflects young people's responses.

Source of learning	Rank (%)
Home	1 (65%)
School	2 (58%)
Friends	3 (51%)
Youth groups	4 (31%)
Faith leaders	5 (18%)
Media	6 (15%)
Other	6 (15%)

4.2.1.2 Teaching about violence in relationships

Almost all of the respondents (99%) felt school lessons should include discussions on violence in relationships. When asked why, the respondents felt that it was an important issue and something that could happen to anyone. They felt that all young people should learn about this, so they can deal with it effectively and know where to seek help. School was felt to be an ideal source of information, as some young people, particularly those who have experienced violence at home, might not understand that it is abnormal and unacceptable. Although they emphasised a need to exercise caution and sensitivity when teaching the subject, as some children and young people may have already been victimised. It was felt that appropriate support must be available within schools to support victims.

When asked what young people would need to be taught in schools to protect themselves, the respondents suggested the following:

- what help is available and where to get it;
- how to help themselves or someone they know who is a victim or perpetrator;
- warning signs/characteristics of violent abusive relationships;
- how to treat other people, establishing respect and trust in relationships;
- acceptable and unacceptable behaviour in relationships;
- feelings, emotions and how to manage these;
- developing confidence and self-esteem;
- how to avoid violence and defend yourself; and,
- have access to real life case studies and people who have experienced violence first hand.

Much like with the focus groups, the emphasis for teaching in schools appeared to be less on sexual education and a greater emphasis on emotional literacy and relationship education.

"I don't think the government or schools give enough information on these subjects. I think it is one of the areas that needs working on"

Sexual bullying was not explored in the online survey as it was felt that this topic needed to be discussed in a space that could provide support and follow up for young people should issues of concern emerge.

4.2.2 Social attitudes and their impact

4.2.2.1 Key messages given to young people

Young people were asked to explore what they felt were some of the key attitudes or messages that were given to young people about relationships and ways of treating women and girls. The feedback from young people was mixed. Some young people felt that the key message given to them was to respect women and be kind and polite, "*be polite and not do something to them if you don't want it to happen to you*". However, a larger number of young people felt that women and girls were seen as sex objects and possessions of men. They wrote of girls being "*disposable*" and that the messages for the

role of women and girls were either that of traditional gender roles or that women and girls value and worth came from how beautiful and sexy they are and how sexualised they behave.

"I think young girls are encouraged to dress provocatively in order to impress boys. This is most apparent in the media"

"Young men and women are encouraged to see girls as sex symbols and nothing more. Who cares if we're successful if we're not attractive too? Girls suffer from low self esteem thanks to the bombardment of perfect images they receive from the media, girls themselves believe that if they are not beautiful they are worthless"

"Women like really rough sex and say no when they mean yes, that slutty or ugly girls are less deserving of good treatment, that women want to get married and are interested in men's money, that good girls don't like sex."

Young people also said that they are given messages that women or girls "deserve" it.

"If a women does something the man doesn't like then there way to teach them not to do it again is to hit/beat them"

When asked where they were getting theses ideas or messages from, it was clear that young people's families and friends played a large role, with school following behind the media and the internet.
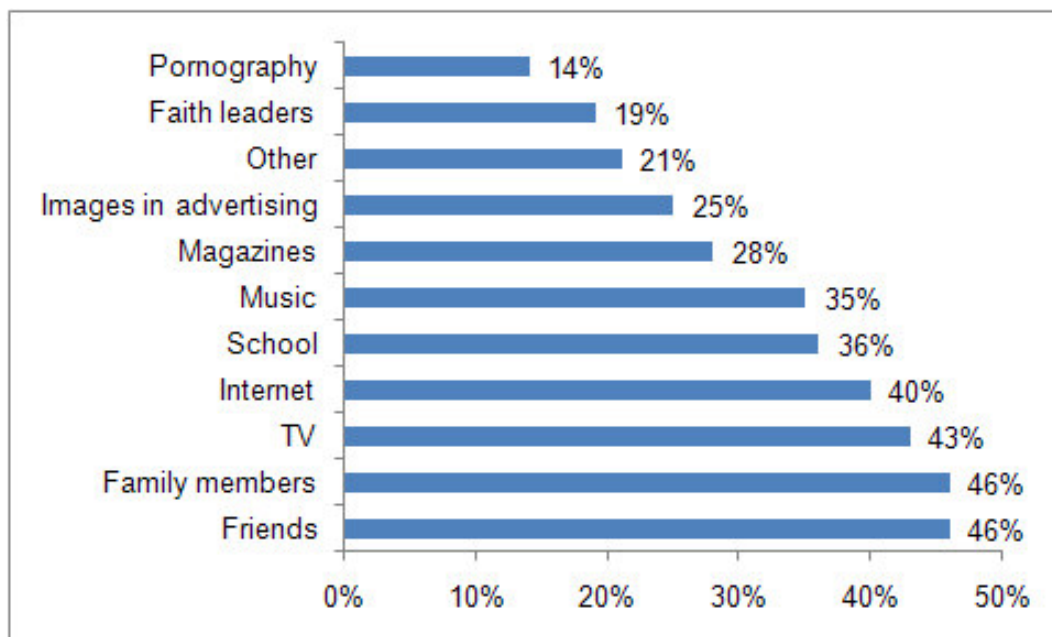
4.2.2.2 Ways of reducing violence

Young people were also asked to explore what they felt would help to reduce violence against women and girls. The vast majority of young people highlighted the importance of education and young people being both educated about positive relationships as well as

what to do and where to go for help and support. They emphasised the desire for this education to start at a young age.

"I think if we should educate boys more about the mental issues violence causes women"

"People need to be taught that hitting and calling people names is a bad thing from a young age, then when they grow up they will know that it is bad."

"I think more can be done in schools to educate young women and girls about violent relationships. I think the issue has to be talked about rather than brushed under the carpet"

Young people highlighted the importance of changing images of women and girls in the media if there is to be a reduction in violence against women and girls.

"The media and general representation of women should be desexualised so that women are seen less as objects"

"The press need to be held accountable….. it is not relevant to have pictures of scantly – clad women gracing the pages of NEWSpapers. The police [in the press] *are portrayed as overly violent. In a society that accepts this sort of behaviour from civil servants, how can we expect to encourage people not to be violent?"*

Young people also wrote of the desire for stricter sentencing of violent offenders and more policing.

Finally, young people felt in order to reduce violence, we need to be able to talk about it in safe spaces.

"Make it easier for people to feel that it isn't something to be ashamed of – that they can talk about it"

4.2.3 Responding to early signs and offering support

4.2.3.1 Offering support to a friend

Young people felt that they would like to gain information to support a friend who had disclosed to them that they had been a victim of violence in a number of ways. The majority of respondents reported that they would like to get information to support them from either their school (61%) or the Internet (60%). Others were: youth clubs (46%); family (44%); and, GP clinics (40%).

4.2.3.2 Support services

Young people also gave indications of what they felt good services that supported young people affected by violence would look like. Most importantly, young people felt support services should be friendly, non-judgemental, approachable, accessible to all, confidential

and provide counselling as well as information. Many young people stressed the importance of staff being women. Young people also highlighted the importance of services being linked into the community.

"You should be able to speak to someone who would listen and help you"

"Services should be active within the local community"

"Supportive, kind, confidential and not intimidating. I'm not trying to be sexist but probably women staff, maybe even some who have dealt with violence before"

Young people wrote of wanting information about services from a variety of different sources. The main place was school. This was followed by a range of media sources such as television, radio, posters and magazines. Places such as GP clinics and the internet were also named.

"*Full scale advertising – facebook, bebo, bus stops, school toilets, public toilets, school assembles"*

"It would be good to hear about services through stories of their good work in the media"

4.2.4 Working with the criminal justice system

This theme was explored in the focus groups only

4.2.5 Feeling safe

4.2.5.1 Feeling unsafe

Young people expressed a number of things that made them feel unsafe at night and more generally. The dominant two were being alone and being in streets with no streetlights/dark streets. Young people also spoke of being at home with the doors unlocked, and coming across groups of people/gangs of people.

"If you don't lock the door, people outside are dangerous"

"Large gangs when I am on my own"

"*Large groups of loud teenagers you don't know"*

4.2.5.2 Feeling safe

Importantly, when young people were asked what would make them feel safe at night, better lighting, and more people watching out for one another were rated highest.
"Being with friends and people who think the same as I do"

"Someone to walk with me who I trust"

Below is a table which represents young people's responses to what makes them feel safe.
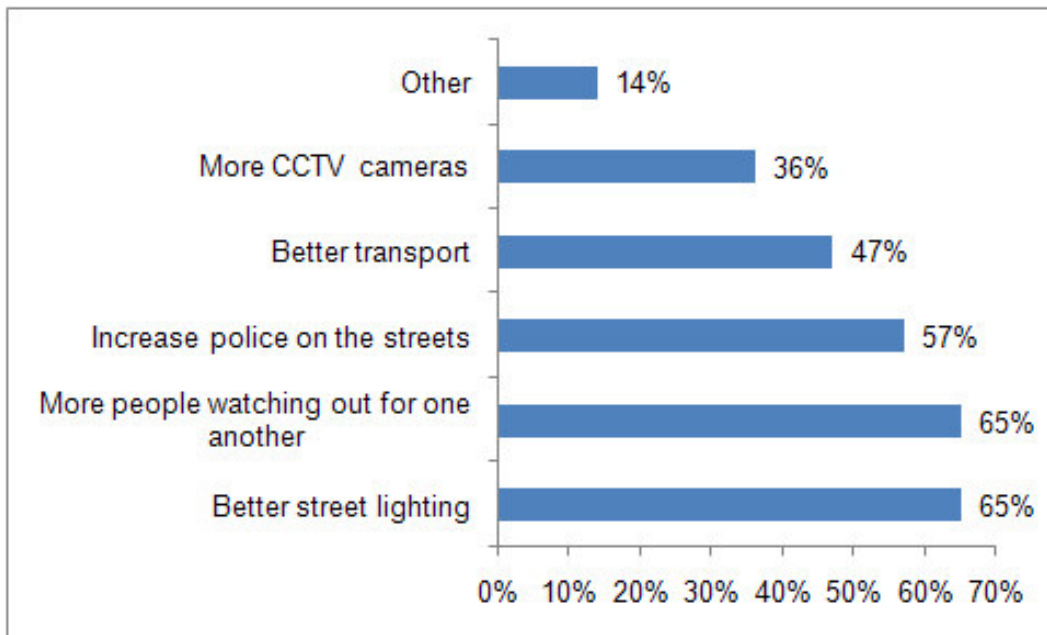
4.2.6 Next steps and key messages

4.2.6.1 Key messages to the government

The online survey asked for key messages rather than exploring next steps the government should take. Much like with the focus groups, young people reiterated that **education was important in changing attitudes and behaviour, and felt that relationships and violence needed to be discussed in more detail during school lessons.** Others simply wanted the government to do something about it, and for them to provide better protection and support to the victims of violence. Some also raised the issue of violence against men and boys, and the importance of addressing this as well.

5. Drawing the focus groups and online survey together

Drawing on the feedback from both the focus groups and the online survey, conclusions will be drawn under the broad headings identified earlier.

5.1 Healthy relationships and the roles of schools

Both the focus groups and the online survey highlighted the extreme lack of relationship education in schools. Young people across the focus groups and on line surveys expressed a desire for there to be more emphasis on making and maintaining healthy positive relationships rather than just the biological aspects of sexual education, and that this should start from an early age. Young people in the online survey and focus groups also highlighted the lack of discussions on violence in general and violence in relationships. They stressed this as another area where they felt more emphasis is needed in the school curriculum. They suggested a number of different ways that this could be done. Examples included drama work drawn from youth work experience, discussions in single sex groups as well as peer to peer models.

In relation to sexual bullying, this was seen as prevalent in most schools and most young people reported that this was not being dealt with and that it was often "swept under the carpet". Some young people felt many teachers where aware of the situation and did little to stop it or deal with it. Examples of sexual bullying given by the young people, ranged from name calling to videoing and sending videos of young women being forced to perform sexual acts.

Young people said they would prefer to go to an independent counsellor, or again make use of peer to peer models such as a peer mentor programme.

5.2 Social attitudes and their impact

Across the focus groups and the online survey, the majority of young people felt that the key messages being given to young people were that men were dominant and women subservient. They felt that both men and women were being encouraged to be highly sexualised however men and boys were given added status for their sexual behaviour and seen as being "players", were as women and girls were described as "hoes" or "sluts". The importance of being "thin, beautiful and sexy" was also key messages given to young women.

In the online survey, there were young people who also identified key messages about relationships and women and girls as being ones of "respect" and "treating them as you would want to be treated".

Young people across the online survey and focus groups again emphasised the importance of education in combating violence against women and girls, and many restated the lack of this in their educational experience. They also highlighted the importance of family and community/religious leaders. Many stated that some of their key messages came from family and community and therefore felt that this was an important area to engage with in the desire to reduce violence against women and girls.

Young people also highlighted the role of the media and the import role the media can play in challenging the images put to young men and women about relationships and ways of treating women and girls.

Mainly in the focus groups, but also mentioned in the online survey, were comments about why women and girls remain silent about violence. Some suggestions were also shared about how to overcome this. Young people spoke about embarrassment, shame, family loyalty or weakness if they disclosed abuse to someone, as being key reasons why women and girls remained silent. Young people suggested more media and "speaking up" about abuse as ways to counteract the culture of silence.

Forced marriages and female circumcision were discussed in the focus groups and young people were all against these practices, seeing them happening more outside of the UK.

5.3 Responding to early signs and offering support

Across the online survey and focus groups, young people again highlighted the importance of education both in relation to being able to support friends as well as knowing where to get information about support services. Young people saw schools as appropriate places to get this information yet schools were failing to provide it.

When asked to consider what a good service that was supportive to young people who are victims of violence might be like, the young people identified several characteristics. These broadly included safe, friendly, comfortable, non-judgemental environment that is confidential and accessible. It is staffed by women only who are friendly, well-trained professionals capable of offering counselling and support to women and children as well as offering information. Offering alternatives to just talking, like art or sport were also highlighted.

Again when exploring support, young people in the focus groups highlighted the desire for a counsellor or specialised trained person within schools that they could approach for support. They also highlighted peer to peer models of support.

5.4 Working with the criminal justice system

This was only explored in the focus groups and looked at policing. Generally young people felt negatively towards the police and felt that they were not very approachable or helpful. Young people did offer ways that this could be made better.

5.5 Feeling safe

Across the focus groups and online survey young people highlighted similar messages about what makes them feel safe or unsafe. The lack of streetlights, being alone and being in places where there were gangs of people or young people tended to make them feel unsafe, whereas being with friends, family or trusted individuals tended to make young people feel safer at night. Along with being with others, well-lit streets and being in places which they were familiar with left young people feeling safe.

5.6 Next steps and key messages

The two key messages emerging consistently from young people across the focus groups and online survey is that they want clear feedback on the consultation and the strategy more widely. They made a number of suggestions on how this can be done, many of which linked to the media. The second message young people gave was, unsurprisingly, the need for more education in relation to violence against women and girls. Young people stressed the importance of there being a much greater emphasis on relationships education and discussions on violence against women and girls within schools, society and the media.
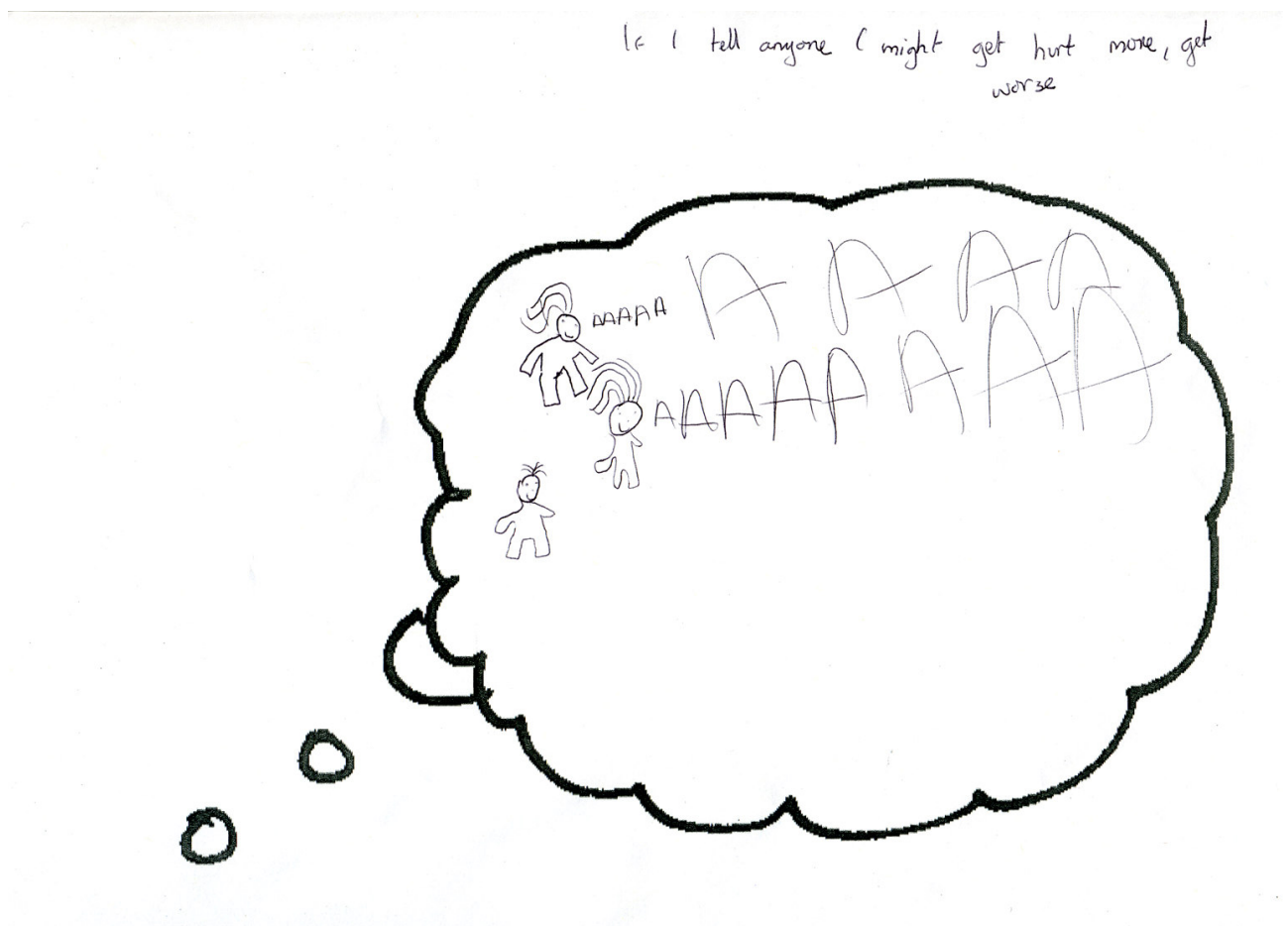
6. Conclusions and Recommendations from young people's feedback

The conclusions and recommendations below are based upon young people's feedback and supported by policy and research work our team is aware of. The recommendations have been in written bold.

Please note that while the focus groups were held with young people in schools and young people's recommendations focused mainly on schools and their community the recommendations should be read as also applying to further education (FE) colleges and alternative education providers (PRUs). This is particularly important since young people attending alternative education are often particularly vulnerable and there is a high incidence of sexual exploitation in the 16-19 age-group – many of whom will be attending FE.

6.1 Ensuring effective opportunities to learn about relationships in school

The lack of relationships education was a key theme throughout the focus groups and the online survey and young people described this absence in school as a missed opportunity it is therefore ***recommended that more emphasis be placed on relationships education in schools.***

6.1.1 Developmental approach to learning about relationships

The government is committed to making Personal, Social, Health and Economic education a statutory subject in schools and this will include sex and relationships education (SRE). For PSHE education to be effective ***it is recommended that relationships education start in primary school and be built on, year by year, from primary to secondary school***. Opportunities to discuss relationships issues also need to be available in post-16 learning. A conversation about relationships needs to be open throughout a child's education in order to make sure that preventative approaches can work and that help can be sought with problems before they develop.

6.1.2 Discussions in school on violence

Young people were very clear in their response that education about violence in relationships needs to happen in school. ***It is therefore recommended that discussions about violence be incorporated into the school curriculum.*** Young people expressed the desire for single sex groups for some of the lessons. This acknowledges the importance of gender awareness in developing interventions relating to violence in relationships. Running some single sex groups often makes it easier for people to discuss sensitive issues with a gender dimension. It is therefore ***recommended that single sex groups be used to discuss and explore issues related to relationships and violence. It is further recommended that follow up work be done in mixed sex groups which facilitate sharing about the discussions that took place in the boys and girls groups and opportunities for communication between the sexes***. An awareness of gender

needs to run throughout the curriculum with attention paid to challenge gender stereotypes and promote positive role models. *It is therefore recommended that these discussions are ongoing rather than one off sessions.*

Discussions with young people showed that they lacked a clear understanding of the boundaries of coercion and consent, what is acceptable or unacceptable behaviour, and what it is legal and illegal. There is also a concern that young people are breaking the law without realising the seriousness of their actions, for example when sending pictures of sexual acts through mobile phones and the internet. *It is therefore recommended that learning about relationships in school incorporates information about the law.*

6.1.3 Building teacher competence

Young people recognised the need for school staff to be specialised if they are going to be able to address relationships issues either in class or one to one. The need for specialised PSHE education teachers is also acknowledged in Sir Alasdair MacDonald's Independent Review of PSHE education. *It is therefore recommended that adequate funding must be provided at a national level to resource this and schools must also show leadership in enabling teachers to take up training opportunities*. Specialised voluntary sector agencies such as Tender, Womankind, Respect, NSPCC, fpa are well placed to input to teacher training and thus help to build work-force capacity. Young people have said (SEF 2008) that learning about relationships is still neglected in SRE – a finding that is confirmed by this consultation*. It is therefore recommended that particular attention should be focused on this theme in teaching training.*

6.1.4 Finding and sharing good practice

Disappointingly young people had little experience of good relationships education in general, and none in schools. The two examples that were mentioned were from a youth centre. A similar dearth of documented good practice in relationships education in schools has been noted by members of the Sex Education Forum. *It is therefore recommended that the education system is encouraged to seek out and learn from examples of good practice outside formal education structures, such as within youth and community work*. The sharing of this information should be a high priority and will require minimal investment.

6.2 The school as an institution that promotes equality

Young people made suggestions about how the culture and systems in the school could be modified to better promote equality and thus address violence.

6.2.1 Addressing sexual bullying

The problem of sexual bullying was very strongly highlighted through the consultation; it is therefore *recommended that all schools take a proactive approach to preventing and responding to sexual bullying*. More input is needed within the curriculum to ensure that

young people understand what sexual bullying is, why it is unacceptable and the effects it has on both individuals and society. School anti-bullying policies need to be re-examined to ensure that they define sexual bullying and state the ways the school will deal with any incidents. School leaders need to ensure that all staff understand and implement the school policy on sexual bullying, and are able to respond to sexual bullying as a safeguarding issue where appropriate. Parents and carers should also be consulted and informed about the policy. It is **also recommended that young people play a central role in exploring how to educate and deal with sexual bullying.** Schemes such as peer mentor programmes need to incorporate information and support around sexual bullying. It is also important that appropriate professional supervision is available for both perpetrators and targets of sexual bullying, for example from a specialised counsellor or therapist.

Guidance for schools on addressing sexual bullying is due to be published by DCSF later this year and should support this recommendation.

6.2.2 Positive role models

Young people said they wanted to see better role models for women in the school and that role models for men are often negative. It is therefore **recommended that schools give more attention to the promotion of positive female and male role models**. This can be done in a variety of ways, for example by inviting in guest speakers, and by working to ensure that women are better represented in school management and the board of governors.

6.3. Expert help available for one to one support

Young people highlighted the need and desire for a specific person in schools or communities whose sole responsibility it is to support the emotional need of young people.

6.3.1 Multi-disciplinary support in schools

Learning about relationships in school SRE will raise difficult personal issues for some children and young people. These young people need to have a safe place that they can go to follow up after the lesson and get expert support. Young people said it would be helpful if there was someone in school who was not a teacher and could be trusted to discuss issues concerning relationships and emotional health. **It is therefore recommended that schools have a trained counsellor or other appropriately trained professional on-site.** Having regular access to a trained counsellor on the school-site is ideal because it creates a seamless pathway from classroom learning to specialised one to one help.

To support this, it is **recommended that a multi-agency 'school health team' in school be developed and similar model in FE colleges.** This will ensures that young people can get help with problems early in a convenient place. This approach is in-line with the thinking underpinning the Children's Plan (2007) and 'Healthy lives, brighter futures: The strategy for children and young people's' health (2009). School and college nurses,

counsellors sexual health outreach workers and CAMHS workers have an important role in providing this expert support.

Support staff in school such as learning mentors and teaching assistants are also an important link because they often develop close and supportive relationships with children and young people. It is therefore ***further recommended that support staff are offered essential and appropriate training to support them in their role and in referring young people to expert support.***

6.3.2 Knowing how and where to get help

Many young people spoke of a lack of knowledge of where to go for support and information about violence. ***It is therefore recommended that more promotion and education about support services and help lines be given to young people.*** This can be linked with school SRE and could include input from appropriate external agencies. There are a number of suggestions in the document of how this could be done both in school and through the media such as the use of facebook, bebo, bus stops, school toilets, public toilets, school assembles, leaflets, youth groups and on women's health products. Young people's information, advice and guidance (IAG) services for commissioned by the local authority also need to ensure they are providing adequate information about relevant support services as part of their responsibility in providing IAG on personal well-being.

6.4. Supporting parents and carers in their role

A key point highlighted through the consultation process was the important role that families play in the development of young people's beliefs and attitudes about violence. ***It is recommended that parents and carers are offered support in this role.***

Research with young people has found that they want their parents and carers to talk to them about relationships – but in reality parents and carers often struggle to talk openly with their children about relationships and find such discussions awkward and embarrassing. ***It is recommended that parents and carers are offered support in this role through the promotion of and learning from current successful programmes being delivered.*** Programmes such as the FPA 'speakeasy' programme offer parents and carers a course over a number of weeks aimed to boost their knowledge and confidence in talking to their children about sex and relationships. Similar programmes – and one-off sessions are offered by some primary and secondary schools and also Sure Start and Children's Centres. Programmes to support parents and carers should engage with fathers as well as mothers. Some families will need additional support and effective referral needs to be made to relevant services to support adults and children.

It is also strongly recommended that schools engage with parents and carers about their SRE provision. Parents and carers need to be aware of what school SRE involves and be invited to complement the school programme with their own input at home. Effective partnership between schools and parents will help minimize parental withdrawal from SRE and can help build parents confidence and knowledge to talk to their children about violence and relationships. Schools also have a role in informing parents about the

incidence of violence and risks posed through the internet and mobile phones and how they can support their children to minimise these risks.

6. 5. Community engagement

Young people mentioned religious leaders as important people to engage in discussions about violence. Acknowledging that religious and community leaders could have an important leadership role in talking openly about violence and also positive relationship values and clarifying what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour it is ***recommended that greater effort be made to engage with community and religious leaders in the movement towards combating violence against women and girls***. A more open culture within the community is also likely to make it easier for young people to seek help. Therefore it is ***recommended that learning from communities that have made progress in developing a culture that supports healthy relationships and tackles violence needs to be shared.***

6.6 Using the media

Many young people felt there should be a media campaign to spotlight the issues of violence against women and girls; it is ***therefore recommended that the government consider a wider media campaign to highlight the issues along with the support services in relation to violence against women and girls.***

6.6.1 A national media campaign to highlight the issues

It is ***recommended that a national media campaign be run that uses a social marketing approach to clarifying what is acceptable and unacceptable in terms of violence and addressing stigma by stimulating dialogue on this subject***. A national media campaign can also open the opportunity to challenge narrow and harmful gender stereotypes and also to promote alternative and positive roles for men and women. Young people noted the power of celebrities but observed that they often provide negative role models that glamorise violence. A national media campaign could use the power of celebrities more positively by working with more positive role models.

6.6.2 Local media campaigns

It is recommended that along with a national media campaign, more localised media campaigns are also launched. It is recommended that young people and community leaders are actively involved in this level of campaigns. For example, media students at a local college could be work with local service providers (both from the voluntary and statutory sectors) and design a media campaign. A local religious or community leader could have a role in selecting the winning entry and launching the campaign.

6.6.3 Web tools

There was mixed feedback in relation to the proposed government website to explore safe/unsafe areas. ***It is strongly recommended that prior to investing money in this proposal, more consultation is done to explore whether this would be the best use of funds to achieve the desired outcome. It is further recommended that should the government go ahead with this website, that alternative methodologies that are interactive and creative such as drama and music workshops are developed alongside the website. It is further recommended that websites that are known to be used by young people are encouraged to make more effective links to support services around violence against women and girls.***

6.7 Working with the police

Young people generally expressed a negative attitude towards the police and their experience of policing. This is part of ongoing historic difficulties expressed between young people about the police. In order for police to be seen for young people as an active part of the solution in relation to violence against women and girls, it is ***recommended that further work be done to build trusting relationships between the police and young people***. This can be done through police engaging with curiosity and a desire to listen and learn from young people, starting with the understanding that young people are experts of their own experience and that as adults we can often find the solutions for young people from young people. It is ***also recommended that learning be drawn from the positive examples of community policing. The Safer Schools programme provides scope for further dialogue between young people and the police.***

### 6.8 Ongoing partnership work with children and young people

The importance of feedback is an essential part of any consultation process and young people highlighted this. ***It is recommended that the government feedback to young people their response to the consultation on violence against women and girls and their strategy more widely.***

Each of the recommendations set out above provide scope for ongoing partnership work with children and young people, for example:

- Young people need to be actively involved in evaluating and developing SRE provision in school
- One to one services provided both in and out of school need to be evaluated by young people on an ongoing basis
- Democratic structures in schools should enable young people to have a voice in shaping the culture and ethos of the school
- Parents and carers need to be supported to listen to and respond to their children's needs in terms of learning about relationships
- Young people's voice in the community will help to inform a community response
- Young people need to be consulted in the design of media campaigns to ensure they are meaningful in the context of young people's lives.

It is therefore recommended that the government encourage and support ongoing engagement and partnership working with children and young people in schools, colleges, communities and local and national government.
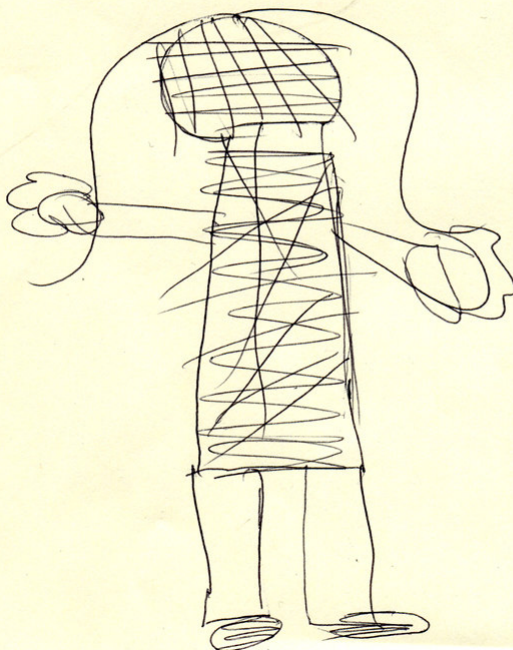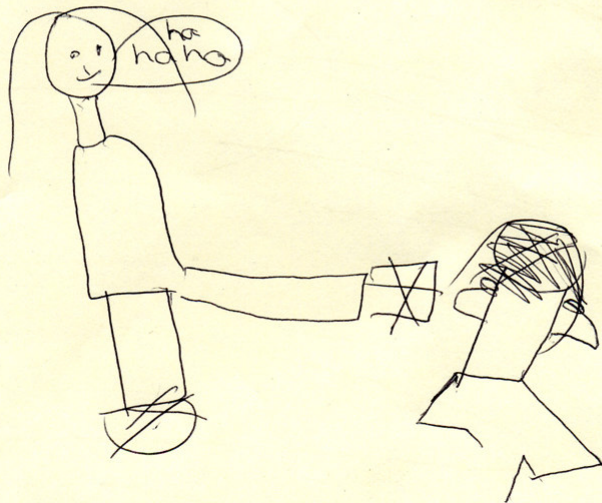
Appendix A - Interview schedule for focus groups

The government are developing a strategy to end violence against women and girls and overcome the problems that this violence causes. They want your thoughts and ideas to help them develop this strategy.

A. How do we define violence against women and girls?

1. What would you define violence against women and girls as being? Can you give us an example?

The Government say that violence against women and girls is any kind of violence or hurt towards/aimed at a woman or girl. This can be either physical or emotional (harassment, stalking, rape, abuse, sexual bullying, forced marriage, crimes committed in the name of "honour", female genital mutilation). It can be at home or in public; by someone you know or a stranger.

You might want to keep this definition in mind when you are thinking about these questions.

B. How should young people be educated about relationships?

2. Where have you learnt about relationships? For example school, home, friends, religious leaders

3. We are interested to know how schools are currently teaching about relationships between young people…. Is this something you discuss in your school activities? Can you share an example where teaching about relationships between young people has been done well? What do you think helped it to be taught well? If you can't think of an example, what would help teachers to better teach about relationships between young men and women?

4. Do you think school lessons should include discussions on violence in relationships? If yes, in what way do you think this would help reduce violence in relationships? If no, why not?

5. Sexual bullying has been defined as "Any bullying behaviour, whether physical or non-physical, that is based on a person's sexuality or gender. It can be carried out to a person's face, behind their back or by use of words.
   For example: Using sexual words to put someone down (like calling someone a 'slut'); gossiping about someone's sex life; groping or grabbing someone; forcing someone to act in a sexual way" (definition from Womankind)…… Does sexual bullying happen in your school? How well is sexual bullying dealt with in your school? What could make it better or what is working well?

6. What else could be done to help young women and men to challenge negative behaviours or beliefs of other young people around them in relation to ways of treating women and girls?

C. How do attitudes towards girls and young women affect the problem of violence against women and girls?

7. What are some of the key ideas that are being given to young men and women about how to treat women and girls?

8. Where do these ideas come from? e.g. Internet, music, sexualised images in advertising/magazine/pornography, messages through attitudes/behaviour of people you know?

9. What could be done to reduce violence against women and girls?

10. Do you think there is a pressure for women and girls to remain silent about violence against them? What do you think some of the barriers are to women and girls speaking up? How can we challenge the idea that women and girls should stay silent about violence being committed against them and that it is acceptable in certain groups in society?

11. Do you think there still remains in some sectors of society beliefs around forced marriages, hurting people to protect your honour and the promotion of female circumcision? How can we challenge beliefs that say it is ok to force people into marrying someone, or to hurt someone to protect your honour, or to promote female circumcision?

D. How can we better pick up and respond to early signs of violence?

12. How would you support a friend or someone you know who has told you that they are a victim of violence? What might be difficult? What information would you like to get to help support a friend or someone you know who has told you that they are a victim of violence?

13. How can we better support victims of violence?

14. What would services that are doing good work in supporting women and girls who are victims of violence be like? How would you get to know about them?

15. What do you think some of the barriers might be to providing the best service for victims of violence? What could we do to overcome these barriers?

16. What could the police be doing better or more of to build a positive relationship with communities and support victims of violence?

E. What would make you feel safer at night?

17. People say feeling afraid of violence makes them feel unsafe at night. What makes you feel safe at night? What makes you feel unsafe at night? What could make you feel safer?

18. The government are thinking of setting up a website where you could report where and why you feel safe or unsafe, would you find this helpful and would you use it?

If you would use it, what would be helpful to be on the website e.g. contact details of neighbourhood police; local authority; other organisations involved with violence or crime?

F. General questions:

19. If you could give one message to the government about what they can do to help prevent violence against women and girls, what would that message be?

20. Is there anything else you would like us to feedback to the government on this area?

21. How would you like the government giving feedback on this consultation, and the promotion of the final strategy?

Appendix B – Young people's online survey

The government are developing a plan to end violence against women and girls. We want views from young men and women about this.

- What do you think violence against women and girls means? Can you give us an example?

The Government say that violence against women and girls is any kind of violence or hurt towards/aimed at a woman or girl. This can be both physical or emotional (harassment, stalking, rape, abuse, sexual bullying, forced marriage, crimes committed in the name of "honour", female genital mutilation). It can be at home or in public; by someone you know or a stranger.

You might want to keep this definition in mind when you are answering the survey.

- Where have you learnt about good relationships? Please tick one or more answers
  - School
  - Home
  - Friends
  - Faith leaders
  - Youth groups
  - Media
  - Other……. Please give details ……………….

- Do you think school lessons should include discussions on violence in relationships?
  - Yes
  - No
  - Why/why not?

- What do you think you need to be taught in schools to protect yourself from violence/hurting people in relationships?

- What are some of the key ideas that are being given to young men and women about how to treat women and girls?

- Where are you getting these ideas from? Please tick one or more answers
  - Internet
  - Music
  - Images in advertising
  - Magazines
  - Pornography
  - Attitudes and behaviour of people you know
  - Friends
  - Family members
  - TV
  - School
  - Faith leaders
  - Other….. Please give details…

- What can be done to reduce violence against women and girls?

- How would you like to get information on how to support a friend or someone you know who has told you that they are a victim of violence? Please tick one or more answers
  - Internet
  - Call centres
  - GP Clinics
  - Schools
  - Youth clubs
  - Family
  - Faith leaders
  - Friends
  - Other…… please give details …………………..

- What would services that are doing good work at supporting women and girls who are victims of violence be like?

- How would you get to know about them?

- People say that feeling afraid of violence makes them feel unsafe at night. What makes you feel safe at night?

- What makes you feel unsafe at night?

- What could make you feel safer? Please tick one or more answers
  - Increase police on the street
  - More cctv cameras on the streets
  - Better lighting on the streets
  - Better transport
  - More people watching out for one another
  - Other………… please give details…………….

- If you could give one message to the government about what they can do to help prevent violence against women and girls, what would that message be?

- Is there anything else you would like us to feedback to the government on this area?