

# White Ribbon Campaign Schools Program

The WRC schools programs (primary and secondary) are aimed at developing an ongoing relationship with schools in order for individual schools to become a White Ribbon School. This provides schools with evidence to show that they are taking a whole school approach to tackling all issues related to Domestic Abuse, Teen Partner Violence and Violence Against Women and Girls. This will be facilitated by working through the White Ribbon Schools Awards Scheme and we will provide each school with the full support they require to achieve this status. As teaching about DA and Healthy Relationships is increasingly acknowledged to be of the utmost importance in violence prevention, but is widely believed to be a difficult subject to approach on a number of levels, we will be enabling teachers to feel confident in their understanding, know how to deal with disclosures from pupils experiencing DA at home and from older pupils experiencing TPV in their own personal relationships, looking at DA as a workplace issue, as well as providing pupils themselves with a comprehensive awareness program tailored to fit each school's needs. The program includes direct involvement from pupils through school council and the Youth Ambassadors Scheme. Whole school awareness will bring about real changes to pupils and teachers lives both in the present and the future. Evaluation of the program is part of the Award criteria so that change can be effectively tracked and documented.

## Why is prevention through education important?

- 1 in 4 women will experience physical abuse in their lifetime.
- 16 – 24 year olds are the highest risk age group for domestic abuse
- Almost half of women will experience domestic violence, sexual assault or stalking.
- In 90% of family households where domestic violence is occurring, children are in the same or the next room 90% of the time
- 2 women a week in the UK are killed because of domestic violence
- 25% of girls and 18% of boys have experienced physical abuse
- 75% of girls and 50% of boys have experienced emotional abuse
- A third of teenage girls (13-17 years) have suffered unwanted sexual acts
- Almost 1,000,000 children witness domestic violence every year.
- In between 30% and 60% of domestic violence cases, the abusive partner is also directly abusing the children.
- Children who have witnessed domestic violence are 2.5 times more likely to have serious social and behavioural problems.
- 70% of teenage mothers have experienced domestic violence.
- 39% of overseas assistance cases dealt with by the Forced Marriage Unit in 2008 involved children under the age of 18, 14% of these were under 16.
- Approximately half of women in contact with mental health services have experienced childhood sexual abuse and/or domestic abuse.
- 77% of children and young people say they don't receive enough information about domestic abuse
- The majority of young people experiencing domestic abuse don't tell anyone
- It has been shown that children as young as 5 years have benefited from having this issue discussed in school

A recent Home Office report found that one in five believe it is justifiable to hit a woman if she is provocatively dressed and one in three hold a woman partly or fully to blame if she was drunk when assaulted or raped. A Sugar magazine survey quoted in the same report found that a third of teenage girls believe cheating justifies violence.

Our children receive messages about appropriate behaviour, gender stereotypes and relationships from the wider society, through education we can develop children and young people's ability to recognize and change behaviour and attitudes which support violence against women.

It is important to teach children and young adults from a young age an understanding of what domestic abuse and

controlling behaviours are, how to recognise such behaviours and that violence and abusive behaviour has no place in a loving and mutually respectful relationship. We can promote gender equality, challenge gender stereotypes and teach them how they can help friends and others experiencing violence as well as ensuring systems are in place to provide support and understanding where required.

## Why schools?

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

## Teacher's role:

It is clear that this subject is complex and involves many aspects which have a direct bearing on people's lives, emotional and mental well being and their relationships. It is not only important that children and young people are given clear and accurate information about domestic abuse but that teachers leading the sessions feel confident in promoting attitudes which do not condone or unintentionally collude with domestic violence and abuse.

Teachers will require an understanding of:

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

As well as considering the well being of pupils, it is of vital importance that the well being of teachers is also considered. For those teachers who have experienced, or are in, an abusive relationship, working with this issue will be extremely difficult. These teachers need to feel supported and know where they can find support. It is also very important that colleagues understand the dynamics of an abusive relationship, for example; it is very tempting to encourage a woman to just leave a harmful relationship but others need to be sensitive to why a woman chooses to stay and be aware that the point a woman decides to leave is the point at which they are most at risk of serious injury or death. For perpetrators who recognise patterns in their own behaviour there must be information available for them to find help and work to change their behaviours.

Working towards the White Ribbon Schools Award is the ideal way for schools to instigate real and lasting change. White Ribbon Campaign will provide training and advice to support the school fully in becoming a safe haven in all respects, support teachers in their teaching, give teachers the confidence to understand and support pupils and colleagues, put local services in place, and raise general awareness which creates demand for social change and helps victims through increased understanding from their friends and families. The schools will be expected to make an ongoing commitment to bringing about this change through education, understanding and awareness of this very important issue.

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