



**'The students are more tolerant of each other; they debate more.**

**They're more willing to think before they actually react, rather than just wade in and punch.'**

*Female Head of Year 8*

# CHALLENGING VIOLENCE

## CHANGING LIVES

### Gender on the UK Education Agenda

Findings and Recommendations  
2004-2007



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**'These things go on. Let's not close our eyes and**

**turn our back on it.**

**These issues need addressing.'**

*Male Year 8 Teacher*

## Introduction

### Acknowledgements

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- ▶ Young people, teachers and schools who participated in *Challenging Violence, Changing Lives*
- ▶ Atlantic Philanthropies [www.atlanticphilanthropies.org](http://www.atlanticphilanthropies.org)
- ▶ Roehampton University [www.roehampton.ac.uk](http://www.roehampton.ac.uk)
- ▶ Institute of Education [www.ioe.ac.uk](http://www.ioe.ac.uk)
- ▶ Qualifications and Curriculum Authority [www.qca.org.uk](http://www.qca.org.uk)
- ▶ Anti-Bullying Alliance [www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk](http://www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk)
- ▶ End Violence Against Women [www.endviolenceagainstwomen.org.uk](http://www.endviolenceagainstwomen.org.uk)
- ▶ National Union of Teachers [www.nut.org.uk](http://www.nut.org.uk)
- ▶ Sexual Education Forum [www.ncb.org.uk/sef](http://www.ncb.org.uk/sef)
- ▶ NSPCC [www.nspcc.org.uk](http://www.nspcc.org.uk)
- ▶ Department for Children, Schools and Families [www.dcsf.gov.uk](http://www.dcsf.gov.uk)
- ▶ For a copy of the full WOMANKIND evaluation report, go to [www.womankind.org.uk](http://www.womankind.org.uk)

**WOMANKIND Worldwide is a UK charity dedicated to raising the status of women internationally. We work in 9 countries with 13 partner organisations to reduce violence against women and increase women's civil and political participation.**

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This report summarises the findings and the recommendations from an evaluation of WOMANKIND Worldwide's *Challenging Violence, Changing Lives* programme which involved eleven UK secondary schools between October 2004 and July 2007. This evaluation was undertaken by a team from Roehampton University.

*Challenging Violence, Changing Lives* aims to create school environments where young women and men are equal, safe from violence and confident to negotiate healthy relationships. The programme seeks to ensure that young people's wellbeing is the priority of all members of the school community, alongside their educational achievements and that young people's voices are raised through this process.

WOMANKIND Worldwide is dedicated to raising the status of women internationally. Our UK work is situated in secondary schools because we recognise that this is a crucial time when young women and men are developing their sexual and social identities.

*Challenging Violence, Changing Lives* considers the way gender stereotypes are part of the accepted norms in our society, and how this limits the lives and choices of young women and men. Within this context, structural imbalances of power weigh disproportionately on women and can be manifested as violence. By participating in this programme, WOMANKIND invites young people and teachers to challenge these power imbalances and to take the lead in raising the status of women in the UK.

The key findings and recommendations from the programme's evaluation form the basis of this short report. They clearly link to the following policies and programmes:

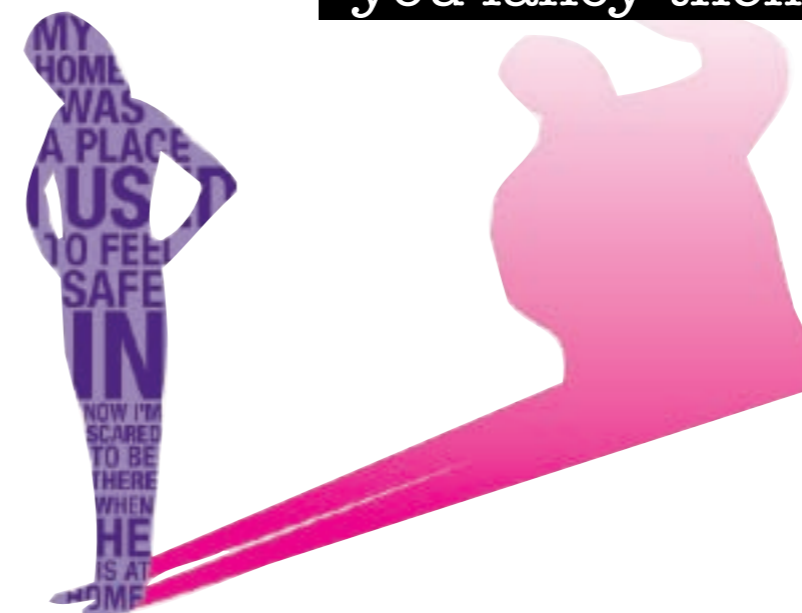
- ▶ Every Child Matters: Stay Safe and Be Healthy
- ▶ Anti-bullying statutory requirements: Sexual bullying in Safe to Learn
- ▶ Gender Equality Duty: The promotion of equality for women and men of all ages, and the elimination of all sexual discrimination and harassment
- ▶ National Healthy Schools Programme
- ▶ New National PSHEE and Citizenship Curriculum: Successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens

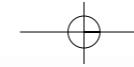
Overall, this report presents a compelling case as to why gender equality needs to remain firmly on the national education agenda, and details how policy and practice leaders can support schools to be places where young women and men are equal, safe and healthy.

**'It's a known fact that boys normally bully girls because they like them.'**

**'If you hit them it's cos you fancy them... First sign of love.'**

*Young woman, Year 9*





## Programme aims

The *Challenging Violence, Changing Lives* programme built on recommendations from research commissioned by WOMANKIND Worldwide in 2003-2004, which reported on existing educational programmes for children and young people that were addressing issues of violence against women.

In response to this research, WOMANKIND developed a teaching resource for Key Stages 3 and 4. The resource was implemented by teachers in UK secondary schools, after they had received specific WOMANKIND training.

The *Challenging Violence, Changing Lives* programme aims to:

- ▶ Enable young people and teachers to reject violence and to understand and question gender stereotypes and gender inequality;
- ▶ Enable young people and teachers to be leaders in promoting alternative, non-violent behaviour and attitudes.

## Research aims

The aim of the research was to evaluate the effectiveness of the *Challenging Violence, Changing Lives* programme, by focusing on teachers' and young people's responses to the training and implementation processes.

A range of qualitative methodological approaches including focus-group interviews with students, semi-structured interviews with staff, written commentary and observation enabled the researchers to explore different facets of the programme's effectiveness.

The evaluation followed the three phases of the programme:

- ▶ The training phase (trainer and teacher preparation, 2004/05)
- ▶ Year 1 of the implementation of the programme in schools (2005/06) and
- ▶ Year 2 of the implementation of the programme in schools (2006/07).

## Key findings

Our findings highlight that violence against women is still a significant issue for UK secondary schools. It is clear, therefore, that gender equality must remain firmly on the national education agenda.

**1** WOMANKIND's research reveals an alarming prevalence of attitudes that reinforce violent behaviours. This was best observed in the way that young people think about gender roles and relationships.

*'You know K – if she calls me names I'll smack her around the cheek... I'd just grab her and I'd punch her and make them pay for it. I can't help it. It's not me – my hand just goes, boom. My hands are, like, alive.'*

**Young man, Year 7**

*'It's a known fact that boys normally bully girls because they like them. If you hit them it's cos you fancy them... First sign of love.'*

**Young woman, Year 9**

*'I think a lot of our students will have knowledge of and have probably witnessed violence against women.'*

**Female Deputy Head of Curriculum**

*'There was quite a lot of low-level sexual bullying in the corridors that we were completely unaware of as a school. Some of the Year 10 girls, especially, began to say "I'm sick of boys touching my bum all the time – they've got no right to".'*

**Male PSHE teacher**



**'You find out you're not the only one. When we talk about it as an issue then you know it's not just you.'**

**Young woman, Year 8**

**2** Despite the many complex barriers inherent in implementing the programme, the majority of young people and teachers welcomed the opportunity to discuss the issues.

*'You find out you're not the only one. When we talk about it as an issue then you know it's not just you, you're not alone. There's other people.'*

**Young woman, Year 8**

*'It's like having a support group. You can express your opinions freely without having someone having a go at you. You get to see everybody's point of view.'*

**Young man, Year 8**

*'The students enjoyed it. It sparked off a lot of sensible debate and discussion.'*

**Male Deputy Head**

**3** The *Challenging Violence, Changing Lives* programme was delivered in PSHE and Citizenship lessons, and uncovered a high turnover of these teachers. PSHE is clearly seen as a 'poor relation' to other, more 'academic' subjects, and is afforded low status within schools – if it is taught at all. This fundamentally affected the perceived value of the programme.

*'I feel that the profile of it in school could have and should have been higher because it's a real opportunity for us to get to the kids, listen to their views and their fears. There are a lot of fears out there with young people in this area.'*

**Male Head of Year 9**

*'PSHE is a poor relation. So that's going to be an ongoing problem until people start to be appointed because they are PSHE specialists and not because they're a mathematician.'*

**Female Head of Year 8**

*'I remember me and some other people saying when we first heard about the unit we're not doing that. Then the more we learned about it, the calmer I got because it weren't all that bad. I toned down a lot. And I changed my views on domestic violence.'*

**Young woman, Year 9**

*'It's more important than things like how a bank works, it affects so many lives.'*

**Female PSHE Co-ordinator**

*'I reckon Maths, English and Science are the main subjects, but PSHE is just as important. It's all about things that are going to happen in the future.'*

**Young woman, Year 8**



**4** Whilst teachers' perceptions of the programme were generally positive, they often lacked confidence and felt ill-equipped to handle the perceived 'political nature' of the content. Teachers noted that training was vital to enable them to deliver the programme, and that developing an understanding of how gender/ race/ class/ homophobia debates around violence interconnect was extremely challenging but necessary. The teachers involved often felt isolated, and did not think that fellow teachers and school leaders recognised the value of the programme.

The impact of *Challenging Violence, Changing Lives* was greater when teachers were skilled in and used participatory teaching methods, such as discussion, drama, film and visual materials.

*'It was shocking. It was something I'd never been exposed to in my own life. People do experience it and do hide it for whatever reason. So yeah, I learned a lot as I was going through, and certainly next year when I teach it, I will be a lot more informed and a lot wiser when I have to deal with scenarios in a class and the questions that children ask, and how to cope with them.'*

**Male PSHE teacher**

*'It was very challenging to actually discuss these things and you need to be sure of yourself and you need to be sure where you're standing.'*

**Male Head of PSHE**

*'The training was really useful. I was a bit apprehensive. But the gentleman who came in was brilliant and he gave me loads of ideas and went through a scheme of work with us and you know, how we could approach certain subjects and it was really interesting. Because initially I thought, oh my God (laughing), I can't do this but no, it was really helpful. Really helpful. I felt that I didn't have any prior background knowledge.'*

**Female Years 7, 9 and 11 PSHE teacher**

**5** The programme had most impact in schools that took sexual bullying and gender equality seriously, and maintained a consistent stance on these issues.

*'Some people are still picking on us. They think the teacher's just telling you stuff and don't take notice. But if they actually said, bullying is going to get you excluded, then that would probably change things. If they get separated from the classes then that would probably change it.'*

**Young woman, Year 8**

*'It was useful to link talking about violence in lessons to school discipline policies and whole school messages which were being sent from the Head at the time. It was good to be able to relate it to what was going on in the school. It did bring about learning and pupils could relate it to safety in school; violence in school; girls being hit.'*

**Male Head of Year 9**

**6** Young people and teachers alike noted that – as a result of participating in the programme – awareness of violence and gender inequality had been raised, attitudes and behaviours were starting to change, and alternatives were being explored.

*'A number of teachers reported raised awareness of sexual bullying, and heightened awareness of domestic abuse.'*

**Male PSHE teacher**

*'I did feel a bit... it sickened me, that men were doing it. I think after the lessons we had a break and we were talking about it then. It's not really a subject you can just do for an hour and then just forget about it. It does stick in your mind. It's something that you need to learn and you need to get a grasp of, especially when you're our age. I personally believe that people have got to know it anyway. Explicitly that it's wrong.'*

**Young man, Year 11**

*'The students are more tolerant of each other; they debate more easily. And they're more willing to think before they actually react. There might be a reason why he's doing that or saying that, rather than just wade in and punch him.'*

**Female Head of Year 8**

*'People questioning themselves and questioning definitions of what violence is, and what's acceptable and what's unacceptable. That's where I'd say it did have an impact.'*

**Male Head of Year 7**

*'Now we've all changed for the better. We've got to know each other a bit more and it's strengthened our bonds more. We interact more.'*

**Young man, Year 8**

*'I think attitudes changed in as much as students became more aware that this happens, and that there are things you can do about it. And that you need to support each other. To start with, there were some blasé comments, whereas towards the end of the project there was a more considered response. I can definitely say there is more respect.'*

**Male Deputy Head**

**'It was shocking. It was something I'd never been exposed to in my life. People do experience it and hide it for whatever reason. Next year when I teach it, I will be a lot more informed.'**  
*Male PSHE teacher*



## Recommendations

The key findings of this WOMANKIND evaluation highlight the need to raise the status of violence against women, as an expression of gender inequality, in UK schools. The following recommendations provide practical ways to achieve this.

### 1 Whole-school investment

The evaluation clearly establishes that gender plays a vital role in education, and school and government institutions need to engage with it as a central part of student identity and learning. When this does not occur, the potential for conflict is significant – with damaging effects on social relations generally.

Prioritising the safety and well-being of young women and men is a long-term, whole-school responsibility. Where there is inconsistency between the messages contained in PSHEE and what is occurring in the playground, students come away with mixed messages. All stakeholders – teachers, students, parents, government – need to understand and develop shared values, and be willing to act within a consistent framework. These values need to address the root cause of violence against women.

**Specifically, WOMANKIND recommends that:**

- ▶ The whole school commits to creating a culture where gender inequality is identified, and violence against women and power dynamics within relationships are addressed openly and appropriately.
- ▶ Senior staff, as well as individual teachers, must take the lead. Individual teachers will continue to feel isolated unless school leaders recognise the value of the work, and support their ongoing professional development and training.
- ▶ Schools mainstream gender equality and violence against women into all school policy, eg the school's values statement, PSHEE/ Sex and Relationship Education (SRE), bullying and behaviour policies. These policies need to be developed with, and consistently reinforced by, all members of staff and young people.
- ▶ The Department for Children, Schools and Families

develops comprehensive guidance on sexual bullying that clearly signals to schools that violence against women is being taken seriously at the national level.

### 2 Raising the status of PSHEE and the gender agenda in schools

The *Challenging Violence, Changing Lives* programme was primarily delivered in PSHEE lessons – the subject that addresses rites of passage into adulthood, sexual and social identities and healthy relationships. Our evaluation clearly establishes that young people do not view these issues as separate to their education, but integral to it, and view them within the 'big picture' of their lives. The programme had most impact in schools when gender and PSHEE content was already being integrated into the broader fabric of the school, rather than being treated as a 'bolt on'. This aligns with the aims of the new National Curriculum, and the general move towards viewing education as a vehicle to developing successful learners, confident individuals and responsible citizens.

**Specifically, WOMANKIND recommends that:**

- ▶ PSHEE becomes a statutory foundation subject within the national curriculum to ensure that this content is taught. This will not work in isolation, however, and needs to be implemented in conjunction with other recommendations.
- ▶ Senior staff support PSHEE teachers to sustain the status of the subject within their school, and accord it the same value as other subjects.
- ▶ PSHEE content is mainstreamed across the curriculum, and assessed in other teaching subjects (eg literature, drama, history, politics).



- ▶ Children's Services in local government support schools to meet the requirements of the Gender Equality Duty through training, guidance and monitoring.

### 3 Teacher training and support

The evaluation clearly highlights that teaching is an activity which is grounded in values, and expressive of them. Gender equality is an integral part of values education. It is reasonable, therefore, for teachers to seek support to operate within this domain.

England is the only country in the UK that does not preface its professional teaching standards with a statement of values. In Northern Ireland, for example, 'teachers engage first and foremost as individuals with a sense of moral purpose and responsibility, and it is in the interaction between ethical understanding and professional knowledge... that the heart of good teaching is to be found'. (GTCNI 2007:4).

In this context, teacher training needs to be re-examined. It is vital that teachers feel equally confident and skilled to deliver subject content as they are to facilitate classroom debate that challenges gender inequality.

**Specifically, WOMANKIND recommends that:**

- ▶ Professional teaching standards in England are prefaced with a statement of values.
- ▶ All teacher training – Post-Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) and Continued Professional Development (CPD) – addresses gender equality and violence against women as a core part of teachers' theoretical and practical framework.
- ▶ Teachers are trained in, and feel confident to explore diverse teaching methods, such as drama, film, dialogue, and visual materials.
- ▶ School leaders and teachers develop support structures within schools. This could take the form of formal and informal debrief forums after lessons, peer supervision, and links to external support services. Teachers need an awareness of relevant referral mechanisms, both within the school and within the local community.



## Links

For further information or support about the issues raised in this report, go to:

- ▶ The Hideout [www.thehideout.org.uk](http://www.thehideout.org.uk)
- ▶ Childline [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)
- ▶ Women's Aid [www.womensaid.org.uk](http://www.womensaid.org.uk)
- ▶ Freephone 24-hour National Domestic Violence Helpline  
(run in partnership between Women's Aid and Refuge): 0808 2000 247
- ▶ Rape Crisis [www.rapecrisis.org.uk](http://www.rapecrisis.org.uk)
- ▶ White Ribbon Campaign [www.whiteribbon.cas](http://www.whiteribbon.cas)
- ▶ Zero Tolerance [www.zerotolerance.org.uk](http://www.zerotolerance.org.uk)
- ▶ Sexual Violence Action and Awareness Network  
[www.eaves4women.co.uk/Lilith\\_Project/SVAAN.php](http://www.eaves4women.co.uk/Lilith_Project/SVAAN.php)
- ▶ Teacher Net [www.teachernet.gov.uk](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk)
- ▶ Refuge [www.refuge.org.uk](http://www.refuge.org.uk)
- ▶ Stonewall [www.stonewall.org.uk](http://www.stonewall.org.uk)
- ▶ EACH [www.eachaction.org.uk](http://www.eachaction.org.uk)



### Notes on terms used

**1** The definition of 'violence against women' which guided the *Challenging Violence, Changing Lives* programme and research was taken from the UN General Assembly's Resolution 54/134 (2004): *'...violence against women is a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between men and women, which have led to domination over and discrimination against women by men and to the prevention of their full advancement, and that violence against women is one of the crucial social mechanisms by which women are forced into subordinate positions, compared with men.'*

**2** The resolution defines the term 'violence against women' as meaning: *'any act of gender-based violence that results in or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.'*

**3** For the duration of the *Challenging Violence, Changing Lives* programme (2004–2007) lesson plans were taught in the subject known as Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE). The new secondary curriculum (2008) developed by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority introduces Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education (PSHEE). We have used this acronym in the report's recommendations section.

**4** GTCNI is an acronym for General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland.

**5** Sexual bullying describes a form of bullying that reflects an imbalance of power relating to gender. Sexual bullying is one of many expressions of violence against women.