

## Countering gender-based violence in schools



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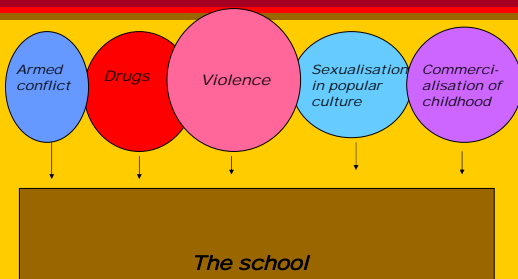
## How I got here

I'm interested in how schools can be helped to address issues of importance that are not central to their academic concerns (getting exam results, getting children to university, etc).

Schools are under pressure to do so many things - are there connections between them?

For example, addressing 'social issues' may assist with the academic 'bottom line'!

## 'External' problems affect schools - examples:



## What this talk will cover

- Identify issues
- Quantify the problem
- Give the case for action
- Provide examples of approaches
- Suggest ways forward



## Violence against Women

"There are many forms of violence that women experience because they are women. These include domestic violence, sexual harassment, rape, sexual violence during conflict and harmful customary or traditional practices such as female genital mutilation, forced marriages and honour crimes. It is estimated that in Europe, 20% to 25% of women have suffered physical violence at least once during their lives"

•European Strategy for Equality between Women and Men 2010-2015, COM (2010) 491 final

## A definition

Violence against women is defined by the EU as:

"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 in public or in private."

## Violence against women is connected with other issues

- Some groups in society are also disproportionately affected by violence – such as people with disabilities, young people 'in care', some ethnic groups, some cultural groups, some people with non-traditional lifestyles
- Violence is mainly perpetrated by men, but sometimes women are perpetrators

## It's an issue for schools



"Young people do not have the freedom to achieve if their lives are affected by VAWG. It is likely that at least a third of the school's population will be affected by violence or abuse in the home with the subsequent impact on attendance, behaviour and attainment"

Freedom to Achieve: Preventing violence, Promoting equality Starting in schools  
(WomenKind Worldwide Report (UK) 2010)

## Violence and bullying take many forms

### "Casual" Harassment:

"I have started wearing shorts underneath my skirt as boys lift up skirts as they walk by ... sometimes they come up behind you and put their hands on your chest"

(Young Woman, Year 9 (14-15 years))

### New technologies:

Opportunities provided by new technology: such as:

- "Sexting"
- Facebook
- Organising attacks

## The case for action in schools The legal case:



- Equality
- Behaviour
- Child protection
- Council of Europe's Action Plan to Combat Violence Against Women (1997)

## The case for action in schools The "Business case"

- Violence makes people feel unsafe
- Violence reduces the ability to engage with education
- Violence impacts on behaviour and attainment
- Violence impacts on adults' ability to help young people



## The "Moral" case

### International declarations – e.g.

- UN Beijing Platform for Action (1995)
- UN Convention on the Elimination of all forms of discrimination against women (CEDAW) (1979)
- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)
- Council of Europe Plan of Action to Combat Violence Against Women (1997)
- CoE Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers on the protection of women against violence (2002)

## Council of Europe Recommendations 2002

Member States should:

*"introduce or reinforce a gender perspective in human rights education programmes and reinforce sex education programmes that give special importance to gender equality and mutual respect. ..."*

*"ensure that both boys and girls receive a basic education that avoids social and cultural patterns, prejudices and stereotyped roles for the sexes and includes training in assertiveness skills..."*

## Schools must take responsibility

*"Schools are a microcosm of society .. You have a chance when you are dealing with young people to change attitudes ... if you don't take a stand over it you are basically colluding" (Teacher)*

## School Culture

*"The problem for PSHE is that there are 100 more negative lessons being taught in the lunch queues, etc. Gender issues are being reinforced during break and lunchtimes - we might be focusing on lessons and learning but we are falling them outside!" Teacher*

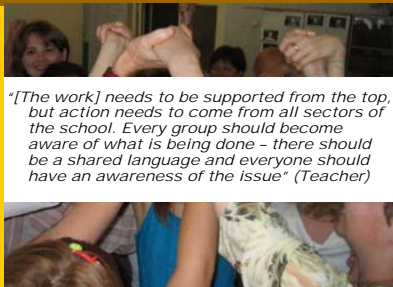


## School leadership is crucial

*"... if someone is passionate about the agenda [and] if the Head [teacher] believes their school should be free of discriminatory practice" (Local Authority Equalities Officer)*



## School Structures



*"[The work] needs to be supported from the top, but action needs to come from all sectors of the school. Every group should become aware of what is being done - there should be a shared language and everyone should have an awareness of the issue" (Teacher)*

## Barriers

- Not understanding how subtle gender inequality can be
- Not acknowledge the extent of violence against women and girls
- Lack of staff capacity
- Lack of curriculum time



## Overcoming the barriers

- Integration of work within current schemes
- Consultation with staff, students, and their parents
- Shared responsibility

*"We need to review the curriculum – link it all together so that we are all giving the same messages – that's where the power comes ... [we] need to be [discussing the issue] across the curriculum"*

## Whole-school Approach

- Strong ethos of respect – staff behaviour and leadership, policies and procedures
- An environment that does not tolerate, but challenges
- Positive work with young men as well as young women
- Support for girls and young women experiencing violence



## Assess impact



*The impact of successful initiatives can be seen across the school, and affect other areas (e.g. classroom discipline)*

## Examples of Action (1): Curriculum programmes

Canada, a 43-session, 3-year programme for 11- to 16-year-olds

USA, a 12-session-prog for primary schools

USA universities, progs included Self-Defence Training

Texas, "Expect Respect" 12 session in primaries + 2-days session in secondaries + TT

N. Carolina, for 13- to 14-year-olds - 10 sessions, theatre and poster comp

## Examples of Action (2): Whole-school programmes

Council of Europe  
*"Violence reduction in schools training pack"*  
support existing violence prevention schemes;  
trains facilitators in whole-school approaches to violence reduction and targets senior staff in schools and other child services

Georgia "Safe Schools" Programme

- address the physical and the social environment
- student participation
- positive behaviour rewarded
- discipline fair and non-violent
- parental involvement
- support for the vulnerable
- children's rights
- staff training
- curriculum resources

## Examples of Action (3): Other programmes

**Kosovo (UNICEF)**

**"Preventing Violence in Schools through Student Councils"**

In 2008 in 100 upper secondary schools for children from 15 to 18 years of age. The Student Councils are functioning in 30 Municipalities.

**Hull, UK**

**Restorative Justice**

A whole-community approach involving schools, the police, social services etc, using RJ across the City

## Back to some wider concerns ...



## Do we need to address such images as this?

- the role of the media and of advertising in presenting unrealistic images of women
- Are these images problematic?
- If so, how?
- The sexualisation of girls?
- What (if anything) should be done?



## Women Reclaiming Sexual Expression "SlutWalks"



## Your thoughts, please

### Examples of Action

- where can this work fit in the curriculum?
- school policies and procedures
- developing the school "culture"

How to overcome Barriers - let's have solutions!

Different cultural and economic environments



## Thanks for listening!

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## Some useful weblinks



- Council of Europe "Violence reduction in schools training pack" [www.coe.int/t/dg3/children/violence/ViolenceSchoolTrainingPack\\_en.asp](http://www.coe.int/t/dg3/children/violence/ViolenceSchoolTrainingPack_en.asp)
- Womenkind Worldwide [www.womankind.org.uk/what-we-do/legacy/](http://www.womankind.org.uk/what-we-do/legacy/)
- UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre <http://www.unicef.irc.org/research/>
- UK Home Office Action Plan to end VAWG pdf from: [www.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/crime/call-end-violence-women-girls/vawg-action-plan](http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/crime/call-end-violence-women-girls/vawg-action-plan)
- International Institute for Restorative Practices [www.iirp.org/whatsirp.php](http://www.iirp.org/whatsirp.php)
- pdf "Research Report 64: Prevention and response to identity-based bullying among local authorities in England, Scotland and Wales" [www.equalityhumanrights.com/publications/our-research/research-reports/research-reports-61/#64](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/publications/our-research/research-reports/research-reports-61/#64)