

Report of the evaluation of pilot of the Respect toolkit for work with young people using violence against partners, ex-partners or family members

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Executive Summary

Introduction

Youth projects and social services identified young people who use violence against their parents or carers or siblings, as well as young people involved in intimate partner violence or violence carried out by groups of young men against young women associated with them.

In 2008, the Respect young people's project staff prepared a full draft toolkit and training package to support work with young people to reduce their use of violence and aggression to intimate partners and family members.

Five local projects from around the UK were contracted to take part in the training and to deliver programmes of work with young people using violence. Two evaluators were recruited. This is the executive summary of their evaluation report.

The pilot projects were:

B: a youth project in a northern city with no background in domestic violence.

C: a Relate project in a West Midlands city; history of work with young people and domestic violence interventions

N: a children's charity with a history of delivering domestic violence interventions

R: a specialist organisation working with young people with learning difficulties in London.

S: a specialist organisation working with adults and young people of African descent in South London

Research about young people's use of violence

Violence is commonplace in young people's relationships (Iwi, 2008, for a review of the research)

Complicating factors include the lack of recognition in research of the variations in **definitions of 'relationship'** amongst young people (Hickman et al, 2000; Chung, 2005). This can be a challenge for work which uses ideas about relationships from work with adults involved with abuse.

There are **similarities** between male and female **levels** of use of physical violence in relationships but **differences** by gender in **context, consequences and meaning** of that violence (Barter, 2009).

Girls tend to suffer from **more serious** forms of violence from males than vice versa (see, for example, Molidar et al, 2001). They also report greater levels of fear (Jackson et al, 2000).

Corporal punishment of children increases the risk that they will use against a parent when they are a young person (Brezina 1999, Hartz 1995, Hotaling Straus & Lincoln 1990)

There is a **complex relationship between child to parent violence and intimate partner violence** in the lives of the parent(s) - Where the mother was the sole perpetrator of domestic violence the rates of child to parent violence to mothers were highest, followed by both parents using violence, followed by father doing sole violence; **domestic violence is strongly related to children hitting mothers but not to children hitting fathers** (Ullman and Straus, 2005).

Young people and the pilot

Referrals came from **schools**, from **youth offending**, from **child protection**, from **domestic violence services**, from other agencies and from other services run by the **same organisation**. **At least ninety-two young people** had some contact with one of the five pilot projects in total during the period in total.

The **range of violence and aggression used by the young people was wide**. Some had committed serious acts, causing significant harm and often resulting in criminal action against them. Others had used no physical violence but had sometimes been in trouble with school for aggression. At least fifteen of the young people had been excluded from school because of their violence or aggression. At least eight had convictions for their violence. To varying degrees, **all the young people in the projects were also vulnerable** in one way or another.

Using the toolkit and other resources with young people

Practitioners said that the toolkit packed full of activities and that whilst this was helpful it was a challenge to turn this into a programme for their specific client group. They also had useful suggestions for developing the draft toolkit:

“Overall I think it’s fantastic, it’s all there” [practitioner, interview with evaluator]

“Some of the activities worked better when we used visual and creative methods of delivering them, particularly as some of the young people have poor reading and writing” [practitioner, group interview with both evaluators and practitioners]

The materials used to supplement the toolkit included:

- Bullying programme materials
- Other calming or relaxation exercises
- More drama activities
- Materials from adult perpetrator programme – adapted
- Self esteem and confidence building activities from other work

Outcomes of the pilot

- At least ninety-five young people were assessed for one of the five pilot projects, twenty-five started individual work and forty six started group work with an additional twelve who took part in a one-off group session who were not formally assessed.
- At least thirty six young people completed group work in one of the five pilot projects and twenty-four young people completed individual work.
- The Respect young people’s workers drafted, reviewed, revised and put online a comprehensive toolkit for work with young people using violence, including an original film, developed a package of training and recruited additional trainers from the Respect Approved Trainers’ pool to deliver training around the UK.
- The Respect young people’s workers established a national practitioners’ network of practitioners working with young people on their use of violence and aggression.
- The** majority of the young people who took part in one of the pilot programmes appear to have stopped using violence, reduced their use of threatening and aggressive behaviour to others and changed some of their attitudes about rights and roles in relationships.

Conclusions

The need for this work is clear and supported by research evidence and the evidence of this pilot. The value of the approaches taken in the Respect pilot and the five pilot sites is considerable and other projects are already learning and adapting from their experience.

This project has improved the lives of more than seventy young people who have been involved in the pilot and the lives of those immediately around them – their parents, siblings, partners, friends and teachers. The Respect Young People’s pilot project team and management have developed a comprehensive and effective model of work, including the toolkit, the training, the support and advice and the provision of national events.

At a time of funding cuts and constrained development for voluntary and statutory organisations, services for young people and adults who have used violence could easily be seen as undeserving.

However, the costs of failing to address young people's violence are considerable. Supporting this work locally and at national level to support the development of new projects and the consolidation of existing ones should be seen as an investment in the future and a long term saving.

We recommend:

1. That funding for work with young people using violence in intimate relationships is recognised as an investment to save on future costs if their violence is not stopped at an early stage.
2. That funding for second tier work to support frontline work with young people is recognised as adding value to the local investment in the direct services, as it provides high quality training, support, resources and networking at low unit cost because of the economies of scale that having a national project provides.
3. That young people using violence and experiencing violence are recognised as vulnerable and in need. Agencies identifying such young people should assess their additional vulnerabilities and ensure that as far as possible these are also dealt with in combination with addressing their violence.

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