

### BOROUGH / PROJECT :

# Hounslow Council Learning to Respect: Domestic Violence Education Programme



### PROBLEM :

A lack of awareness regarding the nature of healthy/abusive relationships among young people. The need for a domestic violence prevention programme in schools was identified by the borough Domestic Violence Network in 2004 when the post of programme manager was established. Hounslow, in common with other London boroughs, has high levels of domestic violence and it was agreed that prevention work with young people could be an important element in the long term reduction in the incidence of domestic violence.



### SOLUTION :

An engagement programme with young people, working with teachers in schools to ensure the delivery of a curriculum to improve understanding of what a healthy relationship looks like. The Learning to Respect Programme is represented on the borough Domestic Violence Network and the Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy group. Objectives are included in the VAWG Action Plan, which supports the Community Safety Strategy, and in the Children and Young People's Plan. Joint working is reinforced through the inclusion of front line domestic violence practitioners in the Learning to Respect training team.

### BACKGROUND :

Although there are domestic violence prevention education initiatives in other London boroughs, Learning to Respect is almost unique in its sustainability due to the development of the multi-agency training team. The programme also has the major advantage of a discrete post created solely for the delivery of domestic violence prevention to young people.

The long-term aim of the programme is to reduce the incidence of domestic violence by educating young people about healthy, non-abusive relationships. The short-term aim is to ensure healthy relationship education takes place in all Hounslow schools, other educational settings and the Youth Service.

The Learning to Respect Programme engages a variety of statutory and voluntary agencies in the borough to deliver training to teachers and other practitioners working with young people. Currently these agencies are: Behaviour Advisory Teacher (in the Early Intervention Service), Refuge, Child Protection, classroom teacher, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Team, Youth Service, Teaching Advisory Team, Police, Targeted Youth Support, Housing and the Probation Service. A representative from the Hounslow Domestic Violence Outreach Service is also part of the team and provides information sessions for parents.

## ACTIONS :

A programme was developed, in partnership with a number of key agencies, to engage young people about what a healthy relationship looks like. Representatives from these agencies receive initial domestic violence training and have ongoing professional development in domestic violence and related issues. This team delivers domestic violence awareness training to schools staff, who then deliver a domestic violence prevention programme to pupils.

In 2007, a Learning to Respect DVD was produced with money from the Metropolitan Police Special Projects fund and this had been made available to other boroughs requesting it. It is also used as information for Hounslow schools taking part in the programme. The DVD contains brief interviews with agencies participating in Learning to Respect, as well as excerpts from a pupil showcase of performance work relating to the programme.

Staff and pupil evaluations have consistently demonstrated an increase in awareness of domestic violence and where to seek advice and support.

Both pupils and staff also participated in numerous borough events and activities designed to celebrate Learning to Respect work taking place in schools.

Learning to Respect is incorporated into the school curriculum by linking it to other schools initiatives and responsibilities, thus ensuring that it is embedded with the school development plan and not seen as an isolated initiative.

Over the last eight years, other boroughs have often sought advice from Hounslow with regard to the establishment of domestic violence prevention work in schools and the programme has been presented to national and local conferences.

## OUTCOMES :

The overwhelming majority of Hounslow schools have engaged with the programme and many primary schools deliver a 'Learning to Respect Week' on an annual basis. Healthy Schools status is only awarded to schools that participate in the Learning to Respect Programme.

Since 2004, 73 schools have engaged, more than 2,000 teachers have been trained and thousands of pupils have engaged in domestic violence prevention work via the curriculum. Staff in children's centres and nurseries have also been trained.

School staff trained consistently indicate an increase in awareness of the nature and effects of domestic violence and the importance of this work in schools.

“As teachers we need to educate children to have appropriate attitudes.” (Primary school teacher), and: “Awareness raising of difficult issues is an important role that schools play. The training/package is also excellent from the point of view of looking at how you relate to each other.” (Secondary school teacher)

Young people report an increase in awareness of the nature of healthy/abusive relationships.

“I have learnt that no-one should make you do anything you don’t want to do and that you should only be with someone who treats you well.” (Primary school pupil), and: “I learnt about the consequences of domestic violence and why women stay.” (Secondary school pupil).

## FUNDING :

Local authority funding, and partner organisations provide their time within the remit of their primary roles. The multi-agency Learning to Respect training team has ensured the sustainability of the programme in the borough by providing a rolling programme of awareness training for schools and other settings. Without the team there would be insufficient capacity to maintain this level of training.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT :

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