

Women's Aid Federation Northern Ireland

Delivering domestic violence
preventive education
programmes in schools and
external settings:
Good Practice Guidelines

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Delivering domestic violence preventive education programmes in schools and external settings: Good Practice Guidelines

**Women's Aid Federation Northern Ireland
2005**

Introduction

Domestic violence is a serious problem. In Northern Ireland it accounts for approximately one-fifth of all recorded violent crime. On average, there are five domestic violence deaths in Northern Ireland every year. Last year, more than 2000 women and children stayed in Women's Aid refuges throughout Northern Ireland.

Domestic violence is the intentional and persistent physical or emotional abuse of a woman, or of a woman and her children in a way that causes pain, distress or injury. Women's Aid believes that the underlying cause of all domestic violence is the abuse of power and control by perpetrators.

Violence in the family cannot be hidden from children and young people. They will often witness violence, be aware of the tense atmosphere, and/or suffer as victims themselves. It is estimated that at least 11,000 children in Northern Ireland are living with domestic violence. Although research currently exists which outlines the extent of domestic violence against women and the effects on their lives, relatively little is known about its impact on children. As for women who live with domestic violence, every child's experience will be different.

Women's Aid believes that the most positive way to reduce and eliminate domestic violence and its effects on children and young people is through a strategy of preventive education work. All children and young people should have access to domestic violence preventive education programmes. While Women's Aid has been doing this work in approximately 100 schools to date, we do not have sufficient capacity to meet demand. The Women's Aid Prevention Training Programme is designed to develop the skills of key professionals to enable and support them to undertake some of this work. Local Women's Aid groups will also work in partnership with schools and other agencies to deliver effective domestic violence prevention programmes.

This document provides information on the work of Women's Aid to develop and deliver domestic violence prevention programmes. It includes good practice guidelines for professionals delivering Women's Aid materials to children and young people in schools and external settings.

The guidelines should be used to ensure a consistent and effective approach to preventive education.

Women's Aid's work in preventive education

The education of young people is one of the most vital and important steps in the process of eliminating domestic violence. Too many women and children in our society are suffering abuse within the home. We all have a role to play in the education of young people about relationships and domestic violence. Abuse must be seen by young people, both male and female, as an unacceptable means of addressing and resolving conflict.

For several years, Women's Aid in Northern Ireland has been at the forefront of prevention work to address domestic violence through the education of children and young people. The key aim of this work is to stop domestic violence happening and to challenge attitudes which perpetuate it. The following five objectives help Women's Aid to achieve this aim:

- To develop accurate and effective prevention programmes;
- To facilitate safe and effective learning for the child or young person;
- To ensure the safety of Women's Aid's staff and volunteers;
- To develop and promote safe and effective strategies for teachers and youth leaders to understand, prevent and respond to domestic violence; and
- To identify further opportunities to promote Women's Aid and its domestic violence materials.

Education programmes

Women's Aid has developed two preventive education programmes:

Helping Hands is a programme aimed at children under 12 years old. Its aim is to develop skills and abilities which are vital for personal safety, stress reduction and promotion of self worth.

Helping Hands incorporates "Protective Behaviours" — a programme which originated in the USA in 1978 as a means of preventing abuse of children. Protective Behaviours emphasises the rights children have in relation to safety and support. Protective Behaviours teaches children to express feelings, make choices and solve problems. It helps children to develop a strong sense of themselves and an ability to express their own wants and needs. Protective Behaviours seeks solutions based on the individual and their own feelings; it is flexible and can be used by anyone no matter what their situation might be.

Protective Behaviours is useful in addressing most of the following issues:

- Bullying
- Racism, sexism, ageism
- Harassment
- Conflict resolution
- Abuse of all kinds
- Helping people realise they have choices
- Restorative Justice
- Mentoring
- Healthy schools

Heading for Healthy Relationships is a Women's Aid programme for young people 12—18 years old. It raises awareness and understanding about what makes a healthy, non-violent relationship and the benefits of being involved in positive relationships.

Heading for Healthy Relationships explores relationships, gender roles, conflict management and domestic violence.

Both programmes have been piloted with children and young people in Women's Aid refuges, community settings and schools, and the evaluations are very positive.

Increasing access to preventive programmes

To date, Helping Hands and Heading for Healthy Relationships have been delivered in a large number of schools across Northern Ireland. This preventive education work has only been possible because of short term grant aid from European funding programmes and charitable trusts.

Women's Aid believes that all children and young people across Northern Ireland should have access to domestic violence preventive education programmes.

“Schools and youth settings are perfect places to work with children and young people while they form their ideas about relationships. The aim should be to prevent violence from being a feature in their lives, rather than to intervene after the event.”

(Silence is not always golden. Tackling Domestic Violence, NUT, 2005)

Women's Aid recognises that a consistent and strategic approach by the Department of Education, the Education & Library Boards and schools is needed to ensure equal and fair access to domestic violence preventive education programmes.

Women's Aid has limited personnel and material resources. While direct delivery of programmes by skilled Women's Aid facilitators is preferable, the organisation does not have the capacity to fully meet demand. In order to sustain programme delivery in schools and youth settings, Women's Aid has developed a training programme targeted at teachers, youth workers and other professionals who work directly with children and young people. The aim of the programme is to:

- Raise awareness of the impact of domestic violence on children and young people;
- Promote a practical approach to personal safety; and
- Introduce facilitators to strategies to prevent abuse of children and young people.

In addition, participants are provided with contact details of local Women's Aid groups in Northern Ireland and information on specialised services for children and young people. Participants are encouraged to make contact with their local Women's Aid group prior to starting programmes to ensure access to support and assistance.

In September 2003, Helping Hands was delivered as a pilot programme to seven primary schools in Northern Ireland. Schools were selected as a representative sample on the basis of geographical spread, religious affiliation and the relevance of the materials to the personal development curriculum within schools.

Prior to the pilot, teachers from all seven schools completed the Prevention Training programme. Data from before and after training showed that participants' knowledge of the impact and effects of domestic violence on a child had increased from "fair" or "average" to "good" and "excellent". A number of teachers reported that they felt more attuned to the problem. The training had raised their awareness and sensitivity to the issue and causes of domestic violence and increased their skills in what to do if there is disclosure. (*Review Report on the Helping Hands Training Programme, CENI, November 2004*).

Feedback on the facilitator's notes and children's materials was very positive. Many participants who had delivered the programme to children described how the pack tackled "the serious subject of keeping children safe in a fun and gentle way – it opens up the topic in a non-threatening manner." All teachers were of the view that Helping Hands met the themes of the personal and social curriculum. All teachers disseminated the pack to other teachers in their schools with the intention of rolling the programme out to all classes.

Tackling Violence at Home — the Government's strategy on domestic violence in Northern Ireland — recognises prevention work as critical to overcoming violence at home.

The Department of Education policy framework reflects growing recognition of the need for schools to provide "education in its widest sense...education which is concerned with preparing all young people to play a full and positive role in society." Schools also have a pastoral responsibility to protect children from all forms of harm.

Pilot phase

Policy Context

Good practice guidelines

These good practice guidelines were developed by the Young Person's Development Worker at Women's Aid Federation Northern Ireland in consultation with the Preventive Education in Community and Schools (PECS) working group, drawn from Women's Aid groups throughout Northern Ireland .

The aim of the good practice guidelines is to ensure the most effective delivery of Women's Aid preventive education programmes in schools and external settings.

Stage 1: Promotion of the programme

When promoting the use of preventive education materials in schools and external settings, organisations can follow best practice by ensuring that:

- Facilitators have completed the recommended prevention training programme.

Available from Women's Aid Federation Northern Ireland

- Facilitators have contact information on local Women's Aid groups and other relevant support services. This could include appropriate posters, information cards etc.

Available from Women's Aid in Northern Ireland

- All staff in external settings are aware of the necessity to participate in and receive domestic violence awareness raising sessions of at least 45 minutes.

Available through Women's Aid Federation Northern Ireland

- All awareness raising sessions are followed by a meeting with the appropriate teacher/youth leader involved in the delivery of the prevention programme.

When preparing for the delivery of preventive education programmes within schools or external settings, Women's Aid recommends facilitators follow best practice by ensuring that:

- A letter is sent to the school principal/youth leader about the prevention programme and how it relates to the curriculum or group's requirements.
- A follow up meeting is held with the contact person to raise awareness of domestic violence, highlight what can be offered by Women's Aid and cover the programme content.

The following items must be established at the follow up meeting:

- Child protection policies and procedures and how to respond to disclosures of domestic violence. Establish who is the teacher/youth leader responsible for Personal and Social Education (PSE) or counselling.
- The need for at least one teacher/youth leader to sit in on workshops and remain for the entire session. This minimises disruption and promotes familiarisation with materials.
- The option of sending a letter to parents or holding an event to promote the programme.
- Confidentiality with reference to families known to Women's Aid. (This information must remain confidential to both the family and Women's Aid.)
- Children and young people being informed of the programme and workshop prior to facilitators starting work.
- The availability of appropriate & comfortable environment/ settings for discussion on feelings and feeling safe.
- Examination of programme content and duration and the necessity for participants to complete all sessions.
- A time slot of at least 45 minutes is essential with a recommendation to carry the work over six sessions or more. (Be aware of holidays, visitors or pre-planned outings).
- A maximum of 35 children/young people in attendance at any one session and that the programme is available to all.
- Teachers or youth leaders are discouraged from choosing specific children to attend the sessions.
- Two adults are present while working with children or young people. The additional adult need only be present and does not need to be working directly with the child/ young person. This also applies even if there is only one child or young person present.
- The required materials are present and responsibility for photocopying and resources is clarified.
- Any charges are outlined or clarified.

Stage 2: Before the programme starts

Stage 3: During the delivery of the programme

When delivering preventive education programmes within schools or external settings, facilitators can follow best practice by ensuring that:

- They take responsibility for the delivery of the session.
- It is good practice to ask the teacher or youth leader for assistance in creating and maintaining an easy atmosphere conducive to children and young people asking and answering questions.

The role of the supporting teacher or youth leader is:

- To keep disruptions to a minimum. Interruptions by other teachers, youth leaders, children or young people should be avoided.
- To observe pupil reactions and to note if someone requires particular assistance or is upset.
- To be aware of, but not focus on, pupils who appear disinterested. This may not be the case and only needs action if they become disruptive.
- To use eye contact or approach disruptive pupils discreetly so that the session is not interrupted. Give children and young people an opportunity to re-engage with the session but if behaviour does not improve, give them the choice to leave.

Immediately after the delivery of preventive education programmes within schools or external settings, facilitators can follow best practice by ensuring that:

- ❑ Information and resources are offered on Women's Aid and other support agencies. Posters are displayed and appropriate support cards are provided.
- ❑ They remain in the building for at least twenty minutes after the programme has finished to offer further support.
- ❑ The supporting teacher or youth leader is advised if a child or young person seeks support from a facilitator.
- ❑ When a child or young person seeks support the teacher or youth leader should either remain in the room or outside the room with the door open, having a view to both facilitator and child/young person concerned.
- ❑ Children and young people understand the limitations of confidentiality and the responsibility of the facilitator to pass information on to the relevant person/persons in order to keep everyone safe.
- ❑ Disclosures of abuse are followed up and documented information passed on to the designated Child Protection Teacher.
- ❑ The designated Child Protection Teacher is contacted within 24 hours to ascertain what action has been taken. If there are concerns that appropriate procedures have not been implemented, act in accordance with your own organisation's child protection policy.

Stage 4: After the programme is finished

Stage 5: Follow-up

As a follow up to the delivery of preventive education programmes in schools and external settings, facilitators can follow best practice by ensuring that:

- The programme is evaluated with children, young people and appropriate staff and the information is shared with the school or external setting.
- The school or youth centre staff are asked if they require further training on domestic violence.
Available through Women's Aid Federation Northern Ireland.
- The school or youth centre staff are aware of the need for a policy and procedures on domestic violence.
Available from Women's Aid Federation Northern Ireland.
- An invoice is issued if appropriate.
- An assessment of future needs for prevention within the school or external setting is carried out within 1-6 months.

Conclusion

Women's Aid believes that the most positive way to reduce and eliminate domestic violence and its effects on children and young people is through a strategy of preventive education.

The Good Practice Guidelines provide facilitators with practical information and advice on the effective delivery of domestic violence preventive education programmes. Account is taken of all the issues facilitators should consider at every stage of the process, from promotion of domestic violence preventive education programmes through to follow up after delivery.

By following the Good Practice Guidelines, facilitators can be confident that they have received the appropriate training to deliver domestic violence preventive education programmes; that they have taken effective steps to promote the safety of children and young people participating in programmes; and that they have contact details for all Women's Aid groups in Northern Ireland who can provide support and assistance to women and children affected by domestic violence.

For support with prevention work and/or other work on domestic violence and related issues, Women's Aid provide a range of services and training programmes.

Women's Aid in Northern Ireland

Belfast & Lisburn Women's Aid

49 Malone Road, Belfast, BT9 6RY
tel: 028 9066 6049, fax: 028 90682874
email: admin@belfastwomensaid.org.uk

Causeway Women's Aid

23 Abbey Street, Coleraine, BT80 8PA
tel: 028 7035 6573. fax: 028 7032 6949
email: womensaidcoleraine@btinternet.com

Cookstown & Dungannon Women's Aid

61 Molesworth Street, Cookstown, BT80 8PA
tel: 028 8676 9300, fax: 028 8676 9300
email: womensaidcookstown@hotmail.com

Craigavon & Banbridge Women's Aid

Horizon House, 198 Union Street, Lurgan, BT66 8EQ
tel: 028 3834 3256, fax: 028 3832 2277
email: info@craigavonbanbridgewomensaid.org.uk

Fermanagh Women's Aid

14a High Street, Enniskillen, BT74 7EH
tel: 028 6632 8898, fax: 028 6632 8859
email: womensaidfermanagh@btopenworld.com

Foyle Women's Aid

Pathways, 24 Pump Street, L'Derry, BT48 6JG
tel: 028 7128 0060, fax: 028 7128 0061
email: info@foylewomensaid.org

Newry Women's Aid

7 Downshire Place, Belfast Road, BT34 1DZ
tel: 028 3025 0765, fax: 028 3026 9606
email: eileen.havern@btconnect.com

North Down & Ards Women's Aid

18 Bingham Street, Bangor, BT20 5DW
tel: 028 9127 3196, fax: 028 9145 5245
email: ndawomensaid@hotmail.com

Omagh Women's Aid

27 Market Street, Omagh, BT78 1EL
tel: 028 8224 1414, fax: 028 8224 1414
email: omagh.wa@easynet.co.uk

Women's Aid in Antrim, Ballymena, Carrickfergus, Larne & Newtownabbey.

8-10 John Street, Ballymena, BT43 6DU
tel: 028 2563 9301, fax: 028 2563 2377
email: womensaidareaoffice@btconnect.com

Training information

Women's Aid Federation Northern Ireland provides a range of tailored training packages including:

The Impact of domestic violence on children and young people

A one day training course for all those working with children and young people

Protective behaviours

A 2 day certified course for all those working with adults, children and young people delivering training on the concepts of self-esteem, empowerment, safety and protection

Prevention strategies

A one day course for all those working directly with children and young people

Children Under Stress

A one day course for those working directly with children and young people

Overview of domestic violence

A one day training programme for all statutory, voluntary and private organisations

Advanced information on domestic violence awareness

A one day training programme for anyone working with women as colleagues or service users

A shared understanding

A one day induction to domestic violence and inter-agency working for all those working on the issue of domestic violence in domestic violence forums, community safety partnerships and other collaborative approaches.

To get further details of the training on offer from Women's Aid Federation Northern Ireland call 028 9024 9041 or email info@womensaidni.org



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