

Together we can end violence against women and girls: A consultation paper

HM Government

A response from the National Council for Voluntary Youth Services (NCVYS)

May 2009

Introduction

1. The National Council for Voluntary Youth Services (NCVYS) is the independent voice of the voluntary youth sector in England. A diverse network of over 170 national voluntary youth organisations and regional and local youth networks, NCVYS has been working since 1936 to raise the profile of youth work, share good practice and influence policy that has an impact on young people and the organisations that support them.
2. The NCVYS network reflects the diverse range of voluntary organisations working with young people at community, local, regional and national level. Most of our members offer opportunities to engage in challenging activities or develop creative talents. They also support young people to become active in their communities and offer opportunities for their voice to be heard. Some offer interventions to prevent or tackle specific issues such as homelessness or offending behaviour. Others offer counselling, advice, Guidance and information. All contribute to young people's personal and social development; some also engage with spiritual development.
3. For more information on any element of this paper, please contact NCVYS's Policy Officer, Hannah Dobbin on 020 7278 1041.

Introduction

4. The National Council for Voluntary Youth Services (NCVYS) welcomes the opportunity to comment on HM Government's *Together we can end violence against women and girls* consultation¹. NCVYS is a supporter of the End Violence Against Women campaign² and recognises that the consultation gives the voluntary and community youth sector (VCYS) the opportunity to reiterate the important role the sector can play in supporting and safeguarding girls and young women.
5. The consultation is a chance for members of ENVOY (Enthusiastic National Voice of Youth), NCVYS's young people's forum, and other girls and women to share their views on issues around safety. 19 girls and women, aged 13 to 48 years old, participated in an online NCVYS poll around feeling safe on journeys at night.
6. This response focuses on issues raised in the consultation document that particularly relate to VCYS organisations and young women and girls. It features specific contributions from NCVYS members GFS Platform (Girls Friendly Society in England and Wales) and Girlguiding UK who have specific expertise in understanding and responding to the needs of young women and girls.

Key recommendations

7. Key recommendations emerging from the NCVYS response are:

Recommendation 1: Schools, colleges and voluntary and community sector organisations should share information and good practice and need to work in partnership to end violence against girls and young women.

Recommendation 2: Sectors need to work in partnership to address social issues through a coordinated awareness raising approach. This could be achieved through locally-pooled resources in response to local issues.

Recommendation 3: The new Advisory Group for schools and colleges should learn from good practice in the voluntary and community sector and include representation from at least two young people. It should also follow NCVYS's principles of youth participation³.

Recommendation 4: Voluntary and community youth sector infrastructure organisations should be used to widely share information and engage voluntary and community sector organisations and young people in Government policy-making through organisations that have a reach to these young people and understand their specific needs.

Recommendation 5: Legislation should be amended to allow pooling of funding, goods, staff and services and delegation of functions to the third sector by local authorities.

Recommendation 6: VCYS representation on local strategic bodies, possibly through local infrastructure organisations, is necessary to ensure a joined-up, holistic approach to safeguarding children and providing services to end violence against girls and young women.

¹ At the time of writing details of the consultation are available via:

<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/documents/cons-2009-vaw/>

² Further information on the End Violence Against Women campaign is available via:

<http://www.endviolenceagainstwomen.org.uk>

³ NCVYS's Young Partners *Principles of youth participation* is available via:

<http://www.ncvys.org.uk/index.php?page=269>

Recommendation 7: There should be good use of data and partnerships across services to ensure that there is a thorough analysis of need to inform priorities around the safety of women and girls as part of local strategic planning.

Recommendation 8: Voluntary and community youth sector organisations need to be supported to develop safeguarding procedures, for example through NCVYS's Keeping it Safe standards and Sound Systems accreditation scheme.

Recommendation 9: Evidence should be collated and used to inform decision-making and investment in effective measures that would make girls and women feel safe at night.

Schools and the voluntary and community youth sector

8. Voluntary and community youth sector (VCYS) organisations often supplement the work that is being done in schools and colleges to educate and support children and young people around healthy relationships and issues such as bullying. VCYS organisations provide an environment outside of school where girls or young women feels safer and more able to talk about their experiences of violence. Campaigns lead by VCYS organisations also raise awareness of issues facing children and young people, for example Mencap's Don't stick it, stop it! campaign⁴ to stop the bullying of children and young people with a learning disability.

Recommendation 1: Schools, colleges and voluntary and community sector organisations should share information and good practice and need to work in partnership to end violence against girls and young women.

Recommendation 2: Sectors need to work in partnership to address social issues through a coordinated awareness raising approach. This could be achieved through locally-pooled resources in response to local issues.

9. Government's new Advisory Group that will focus on how schools help children and young people to develop healthy relationships, deal with their emotions and work most effectively to harness their impact on preventing violence against girls and women, should consider practice and examples of good practice that can be found in the VCYS. It should also look at how schools are using citizenship and PSHE lessons to ensure that awareness of violence and domestic abuse is included in relationship education for girls. Specialist VCYS organisations may be able to support schools in delivering this agenda.
10. NCVYS welcomes the inclusion of at least one young person on the Advisory Group, however we would urge that at least two young people are involved so that they can support each other. NCVYS's Young Partners *Principles of youth participation* may be a useful resource for the Advisory Group.

Recommendation 3: The new Advisory Group for schools and colleges should learn from good practice in the voluntary and community sector and include representation from at least two young people. It should also follow NCVYS's principles of youth participation⁵.

⁴ Further information on Mencap's Don't stick it, stop it! campaign is available via:

<http://www.mencap.org.uk/dontstickit>

⁵ NCVYS's Young Partners *Principles of youth participation* is available via:

<http://www.ncvys.org.uk/index.php?page=269>

Breaking down barriers

11. VCYS organisations play a central role in community cohesion and breaking down barriers between young people and those around them. Within the VCYS, there is innovative practice that often reaches the most vulnerable young people which can be shared and learnt from by all sectors. For example, organisations such as GFS Platform work with girls and young women to develop their self-esteem and concepts around power and control:

Young Parents/Young Parents to Be group – GFS Platform Great Yarmouth

GFS Platform Great Yarmouth was established in 1989 and works with young women, aged between 14 and 25 years old, who are either pregnant or who have children. The project works with upwards of 100 women a week and their children. Some of the young women supported by GFS Platform have experienced abusive relationships, be it physical, mental, sexual or emotional. As part of their learning, the young women are supported through a 12 week course and sessions on Appropriate Behaviours which have received a lot of positive feedback and requests for more sessions around the subject.

One girl that the group supported was 17 years old with a seven month old son. Social services were involved with the girl before she joined the project. During her time on the 12 week course her circumstances took a turn for the worse and because she was not ready to leave her abusive boyfriend, they placed her and her son in a foster placement. She continued to attend the course and access the Bouncing Babies drop-in with her son. The girl was supported through conversations about her self-esteem and the many aspects of power and control regarding her boyfriend. She ended the relationship with her boyfriend and attended the Freedom Programme to hopefully understand the effects domestic abuse has had on her and her son's lives.

The project continues to work with young women, including regular discussions around the many issues linked with abusive and controlling partners.

Further information >> <http://www.gfsplatform.org.uk/great-yarmouth.htm>

12. VCYS organisations can also provide support for girls and young women through peer-to-peer advice and mentoring projects. Girlguiding UK's research series, *Girls shout out!*⁶, highlighted that girls and young women find advice more valuable when it is delivered to them by their peers or young women who are slightly older than them and therefore seen as being experienced but not adults. As an example of this in practice, Girlguiding UK offers peer education training for its young members aged 14 to 25:

⁶ Further information on Girlguiding UK's research series, *Girls Shout Out!*, is available via: <http://www.girlguiding.org.uk/xq/asp/sID.628/qx/whoweare/article.asp>

4 and In4mers – Girlguiding UK

Girlguiding UK's peer education training for its young members is called '4' and the young women who are trained become 'In4mers'. The young women, aged 14 to 25 years old, attend a residential training that equips them with the skills to be able to deliver sessions to their peers and young girls in guiding aged ten upwards. The In4mers can deliver sessions on subjects including, bullying, eating disorders and self esteem.

Girlguiding UK, through the In4mer programme and other resources such as the 'Looking at Me' pack focused on positive body image and self esteem, works through its girl-only space to increase the confidence of girls and young women by allowing them to express their opinions and giving them the lead in the direction of the organisation.

Further information >> <http://www.girlguiding.org.uk>

13. NCYVS and other VCYS infrastructure organisations can provide a vital communication channel between organisations and young women. This conduit can be used to share information and facts that can help challenge views within society around violence against girls and women. They can also facilitate the engagement of VCYS organisations and young people in Government consultation exercises, e.g. the forthcoming fact-finding review to consider the pressure on girls to appear sexually available at younger and younger ages.

Recommendation 4: Voluntary and community youth sector infrastructure organisations should be used to widely share information and engage voluntary and community sector organisations and young people in Government policy-making through organisations that have a reach to these young people and understand their specific needs.

Service provision, funding and joined-up working

14. There is a strong need to develop consistent provision of services targeted at tackling violence against women and girls. The Equality and Human Rights Commission and the End Violence Against Women coalition has mapped services for women who have experienced violence⁷. Key findings from research in January 2009 include:
 - over a quarter of local authorities (LAs) in Great Britain offer no specialised service at all;
 - fewer than 3% of LAs, or 11 out of 408, offer a diversity of services;
 - over the last 12 months investment has been focused on the statutory sector, and criminal justice based responses: 60% of all new services mapped are located here, whereas in the women's voluntary sector specialised services have remained static or in some cases diminished; and
 - all LAs in Wales and Scotland have at least one service but 30% (109) in England have no service.

⁷ Further information on Map of Gaps and the campaigns recommendations for achieving consistency of service delivery to tackle violence against women is available via: <http://www.mapofgaps.org>

15. Given the economic climate, there is even greater caution with the VCYS around funding; 'Charities should assume that all sources of income will be under pressure, whilst there are likely to be more demands on their resources' (Quicke & Bevan, 2009⁸). There have also been other impacts on charities' finances such as the Icelandic bank crisis⁹ which is a new issue linked to the modernised age. Some NCVYS members have been directly affected by the crisis and have lost money as a result.
16. There is a constant demand from the VCYS for long-term, sustainable funding arrangements to not only ensure that proven initiatives can continue, but also that new projects have time to demonstrate effective outcomes. To challenge barriers to the sustainable delivery of, and funding for, services for victims of violence against girls and young women, legislation needs to be amended to allow pooling of funding, goods, staff and services and delegation of functions to the third sector by LAs.

Recommendation 5: Legislation should be amended to allow pooling of funding, goods, staff and services and delegation of functions to the third sector by local authorities.

17. VCYS organisations that provide services for victims of violence delivered need to be aware of all funding opportunities that are available. Local, regional and national VCYS infrastructure organisations can facilitate this information sharing and in some instances, support organisations through the application process.
18. Awareness of existing local services and opportunities for joined-up working need to be promoted throughout all sectors to encourage a varied approach to providing services for girls and young women who have been affected by violence. This will also contribute to reducing duplication in services.

Recommendation 6: VCYS representation on local strategic bodies, possibly through local infrastructure organisations, is necessary to ensure a joined-up, holistic approach to safeguarding children and providing services to end violence against girls and young women.

19. VCYS representation on local strategic bodies, such as Children's Trusts and Local Safeguarding Children's Boards (LSCBs), is necessary to ensure a joined-up, holistic approach to safeguarding children and in particular to provide services that can end violence against girls and young women. To ensure consistency in representation of the VCYS on local strategic bodies, local infrastructure organisations, as entities which represent the local third sector, should be encouraged to participate and ensure an effective mechanism for sharing relevant information within their own sector in order to build awareness about developments in planning of local priorities which can impact on the sector.
20. LAs can, and should, use the gender equality duty and reporting through the local equality schemes to ensure that priorities are set to safeguard the interests of women and girls, particularly where it is deemed they are vulnerable. In particular, the LSCB will need to ensure that it is able to use its duty to safeguard all children and young people to ensure that vulnerable girls and young women have the support they need to ensure they are protected against violent acts and abuse. LSCBs will need to work with local voluntary and community organisations that have expertise in this area. For example, Camden LA undertook a project in partnership with the local voluntary and community sector to raise awareness about female genital mutilation within the local community in Camden. This was effective in bringing 'taboo' issues to open discussion, using the insight of voluntary

⁸ Quicke, M. & Bevan, J. (2009) *Surviving a Recession. Network – Special Supplement Surviving the Economic Downturn – A Charity's Guide, Winter 2009*. P.13.

⁹ The Treasury Committee (2009) *Banking Crisis: The impact of the failure of the Icelandic Banks* is available via: <http://news.parliament.uk/2009/04/report-on-icelandic-banks/>

and community organisations who work with young people at risk and promoting community cohesion through bringing elders in a faith community together with younger citizens sharing the same faith identity in order to exchange view on the issue.

21. In setting priorities for local Children and Young People's Plans (CYPPs), safeguarding services will need to work in partnership with community safety teams to ensure that they are identifying where particular safety issues may exist for women and girls and ensure that consultation with local providers takes place to inform a coordinated response through priority setting in CYPPs that take account of emerging issues. Local priorities to prevent violence against women and girls can be coordinated through existing national indicators such as NI 69, which tracks the level of children who have experienced bullying, and NI 50, looking at emotional health and well being. Local Tellus surveys can be used to elicit where particular problems around emotional wellbeing and safety may be an issue. A coordinated approach to the use of local information both through data collection and services working with young people should ensure representation of the right issues and a monitoring of these through the CYPP review process which should link to the Local Strategic Partnership Board and the wider community strategy for a LA area.

Recommendation 7: There should be good use of data and partnerships across services to ensure that there is a thorough analysis of need to inform priorities around the safety of women and girls as part of local strategic planning.

22. LAs must be effective in exercising the commissioning of local services and engage with the VCYS at all opportunities. It is important that the VCYS is recognised by all involved in the commissioning process as a viable provider of services and that all VCYS organisations, no matter how small, are involved. Initiatives like the DCSF's Commissioning Support Programme for Children's Trusts¹⁰, developed with input from the voluntary and community sector, including NCVYS, should be encouraged to enable commissioners of services to do so in an informed and consistent way.
23. Organisations that work with children and young people need to be supported in developing safeguarding procedures. To this end NCVYS has developed Keeping it Safe, a good practice guide and Sound Systems¹¹, a peer accreditation scheme aimed at voluntary youth organisations. Keeping it Safe has received endorsements from DCSF, the NSPCC and other key stakeholders and is a good example of how the VCYS can lead the way in safeguarding work. Through LSCBs, the VCYS could work in partnership with LAs and organisations outside of the VCYS to develop safeguarding in all sectors.

Recommendation 8: Voluntary and community youth sector organisations need to be supported to develop safeguarding procedures, for example through NCVYS's Keeping it Safe standards and Sound Systems accreditation scheme.

Feeling safer when out at night

24. 19 girls and women, aged between 13 and 48, responded to a NCVYS webpoll around safety when travelling at night, based on questions posed by HM Government in its consultation document.
25. When asked about how they choose which route to take home when it is dark, the majority of respondents stated that they avoid small alleyways and chose well lit, busy roads if possible. However, most of the younger respondents stated that they chose whatever the

¹⁰ Further information on the Commissioning Support Programme for Children's Trusts is available via: <http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/strategy/planningandcommissioning/commissioningsupport/>

¹¹ Further information on Keeping it Safe and Sound Systems can be found via <http://www.ncvys.org.uk/index.php?page=262>

quickest route was. A couple of respondents highlighted that they felt safer on public transport, rather than going home alone in a taxi. Some respondents quotes include:

- 'I take whichever route is better lit, which sometimes means a longer journey. I avoid places I know gangs of teenagers hang around'; and
- 'route that is best lit, avoids alleyways, pubs etc and goes past people's houses so if I thought someone was following me I could ring the doorbell of someone's house! I also walk on the same side of the road as the oncoming traffic'.

26. Things that respondents felt make their route feel safe included:

- there are lots of people;
- public transport takes me close to my home;
- there is good lighting;
- passing homes; and
- busy roads.

One respondent stated:

mainly my own behavior – if I am walking home when it is dark, then I consider myself to be safer if I am aware of my surroundings, so I try to avoid having headphones in and having my phone out texting. Without these I usually feel safe.

27. Things that respondents felt make their route feel unsafe included not being able to see what is ahead clearly and feeling isolated. Some of the younger respondents highlighted 'weird men' and boys/men in gangs hanging around as a factor that made them feel unsafe. One participant stated her reason for feeling unsafe on her route home:

A cultural norm that puts women on edge and suggests that other people wouldn't help in an emergency – leaving them at a disadvantage at night time. Knowing where officials are, e.g. knowing that there are a group of police people in a reachable location makes it easier to have somewhere to aim for to get help when something goes wrong.

28. In order to make journey's feel safer, the majority of respondents wanted better street lighting, one person highlighted that there was street lighting but it did not work. Other ideas for what would make journey's feel safer included:

- more staff at train stations;
- female only taxi services;
- more police presence; and
- less people sitting in parks, usually drinking.

Views on CCTV as a tool to make people feel safer were varied. A couple of respondents highlighted that CCTV does not make them feel safer as 'it's only for finding out who did what afterwards' but another respondent thought that CCTV cameras would be beneficial as 'gangs would feel they are being watched and not hang around there all the time'.

29. The areas where girls and women felt most unsafe in when it is dark were parks, underpasses, car parks and walkways (where there are no cars). Other suggestions included bus stops, shopping areas which are closed at night and unmanned over-ground train stations.

30. Previous feedback from young people, as part of NCVYS's response to *Staying Safe*, suggested that school, the home, parks and town centres were all seen as being both safe and unsafe places by the participants.

31. HM Government's consultation document suggests the development of an interactive website that allowed people to report where and why they felt either safe or unsafe. The majority of respondents to the NCVYS poll were not sure whether this would be useful or not. However if it did exist features that respondents thought would be most useful were:

- an option to send reports automatically to the local council or police; and
- contact details for neighbourhood policing teams.

32. Other suggestions for such a website included:

- 'make it anonymous so that people don't feel threatened and won't get found out or anything';
- 'ideas on how you could stay safe when you are in the dark and what you should do if something bad happens';
- 'the knowledge that some action was taken to change the atmosphere about that area, e.g. if a Neighbourhood Watch became a knock on my door if you're in trouble type of club, rather than a nosey neighbour one'; and
- 'an option to mark where I felt unsafe on a map, and know someone would investigate if several users marked the same area'.

33. One respondent highlighted that safety might be more of a personal issue that could not be helped by a website:

I'm not sure that I would relate a website to my experiences of feeling safe. I think it is a completely subjective feeling and fear of crime is often not related to the likelihood of becoming a victim of crime. While fear of crime is a real issue, I think it's best tackled by an individual changing their behavior..... As far as I'm aware there are already mechanisms for reporting faulty street-lighting/requesting more etc., so I'm not sure that a further website would be able to provide much more.

34. Girlguiding UK has published its own research findings and recommendations around girls safety (see next page):

Redefining risk – Girlguiding UK

Redefining risk: Girls shout out! research by Girlguiding UK, of its members aged 10 to 18, found that although girls felt that they were able to identify risky situations, when travelling alone 40% still did not plan ahead to ensure their own safety. This was partly caused by a lack of correctly identifying the dangers they are likely to face. For example, mobile phones are viewed as the ultimate safety accessory with 95% of girls surveyed feeling that carrying a mobile phone was a means of protection. However, few recognised that there are inherent risks in carrying and using a valuable piece of equipment in public.

Girls who contributed to a recommendations panel based on the research findings suggested Government should take measures to ensure girls know how to access safety information. The panel recommended that more needs to be done to publicise how young women can get hold of free resources such as personal attack alarms. The young women also suggested piloting a young person's taxi scheme with designated youth ranks to enable cab-sharing. Finally, the panel asked that policymakers should think carefully about treating them differently from boys. Boys are not necessarily safer than girls and girls should be equipped to look after themselves.

Girlguiding UK is committed to offering a girl only space in which girls can safely experience risky activities and learn from these in order to build their own risk assessment criteria.

Further information >> <http://www.girlguiding.org.uk>

Recommendation 9: Evidence should be collated and used to inform decision-making and investment in effective measures that would make girls and women feel safe at night.