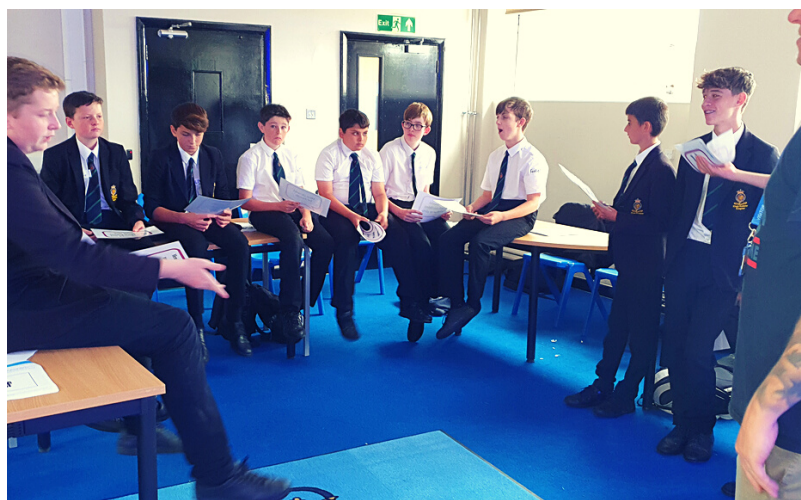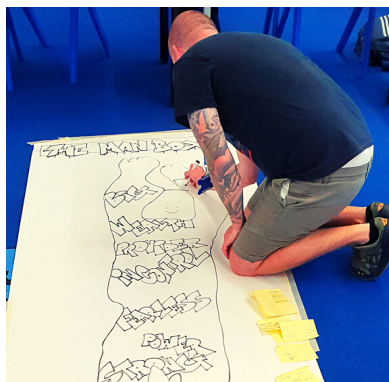# MAPS TO MANHOOD

Building Healthy Respectful Relationships

STEPS TO RESPECT
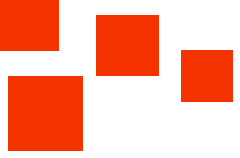
End of Project Report: March 2023

PRIORITY 1-54

East Sussex County Council

Sussex Police & Crime Commissioner

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all the young people who took part in the workshops, for their openness, honesty and insights.

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- Danniella Di Pilla, Project Coordinator: Criminal Exploitation and Harmful Sexual Behaviour for undertaking the external evaluation with educational settings

About Priority 1-54

Priority 1-54 is a Brighton-based CiC established in 2017. Our mission and ethos are underpinned by co-production principles that seek to promote the rights and well-being of every child where they live, learn and play.

We offer creative youth and community engagement projects that *inform, inspire and empower* children and young people on matters they feel passionate about.

Contact

Priority 1-54
40 Holland Street
Hanover
Brighton
BN2 9WB

www.priority154.com
john.khan@priority154.com
tel: 07846 137 597

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End of Project Report 2023

Insights

"

These workshops made me take notice and understand what really happens in school about sexist banter and sexual harassment

PHSRE is better done the way you guys have taught us because it's honest and open

The conversations we covered were very helpful and everyone got involved, even when we talked about sexual bullying which was hard. It's a hard topic but that's what we need...to be told

The workshop was good because it was about how we need to talk about what it means to be a man and why we need to normalise talk about sexual harassment

The workshops were amazing because I got to hear other people's views about what it means to be a man and got to have my say without the conversation being closed down

It was useful talking about bystanders and what we would honestly do in certain situations without being judged

What's needed is an understanding of the consequences of sexual bullying in school but to a level that is not currently taught

Talking about how to deal with sexual harassment and sexual bullying was helpful and not just telling us that it isn't okay

I think talking about sexual harassment is a good thing and educating boys is important. As someone [*trans young man*] who has experienced this [*sexual bullying*], I appreciated being able to talk about it

"

Insights

"

I enjoyed the workshop because it was honest and improved my confidence about how to stand up for people being harassed without making things worse

What's needed is teachers who listen when something is reported and then act faster to sort things out

We need more lessons about how to treat each other with respect

Teachers should be more understanding about our experiences of sexual bullying and they shoud talk about it more

Teach what to do when you have been sexually assaulted or seen other people being assaulted and have a safe space to talk about these experiences

What we need is safe spaces to go to when people have experienced sexual assaults

I've appreciated being able to discuss this subject *[sexual harassment]* in a safe group, knowing that what I say is accepted and not shared outside of the group. It has been very freeing

I really liked how we were listened to and knowing that my contribution would actually be respected and put into action

The school needs to listen to what students have said in these workshops and help them

"

Recommendations

The recommendations outlined below were identified and developed by young people during the workshops.

01   Student voice

Student voice must be at the heart of discussions around whole-school approaches to prevent and effectively respond to incidents of sexual bullying and sexual harassment

02   Create a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Group

A student-led group that works alongside the school leadership team to offer insights that the school may not be aware of and help avoid tokenism

03   A gender sensitive approach

Where appropriate, offer gender-specific workshops and programs addressing sexual bullying and sexual harassment

04   Create safe and inclusive spaces

Create safe spaces in schools for young women and men to talk openly and honestly about sexualised bullying

05   Mobilising young men as allies

Prevention efforts in school should give greater emphasis on mobilising young men as allies for collective action and include bystander training

Recommendations

06 **Equalities training**

Whole school training to better understand definitions of sexual bullying and sexual harassment to increase confidence when responding to disclosures

07 **PHRSE training**

High-quality PHRSE training to support the delivery of a carefully sequenced PHRSE curriculum that includes sexualised bullying, consent, nudes and pornography

08 **High quality PHRSE and Sex Education**

Provide PHRSE and Sex Education that are relevant and relatable, using outside 'experts' to support gaps in knowledge

09 **Reporting and recording**

Offer several reporting mechanisms to support disclosures of sexual bullying and a same-sex member of staff to follow up on incidents

10 **Appropriate and effective support**

Provide appropriate and effective support in and outside of school for those who are affected by sexual bullying and/or sexual harassment

1. Introduction

1.1. The Maps to Manhood project was undertaken between April 2022 and January 2023, as part of a multi-agency response to Child Exploitation and Harmful Sexual Behaviours in East Sussex to support secondary schools in delivering high-quality preventative education.

1.2 The project was funded locally via Public Health and East Sussex PSHE Hubs, as part of the national Safer Streets agenda.

1.3 The Maps to Manhood (M2M) initiative presents a comprehensive series of interactive workshops to schools, aimed at establishing a safe space for young males to explore harmful gender stereotypes, foster healthy relationships, consent and address online and offline sexual harassment. Subsequently, additional funding was obtained to implement a parallel workshop series for young females titled Steps to Respect (S2R).

1.4 This report provides a summary of how the project objectives were addressed, progress towards the realisation of the expected benefits of the project, and lessons learned to assist any future undertaking of work in this area.

2. Context

2.1 The Maps to Manhood program was originally co-produced with young people in 2018 and has been updated several times to take account of new research regarding young people's experience of sexual harassment and sexualised bullying in schools.

2.2 The program is underpinned by creative learning methods which provide a 'safe space' to address sensitive issues and incentivise young people to better understand their perspectives and experiences. These include age-appropriate discussion and debating strategies, forum theatre, and arts-based activities such as urban and graffiti art.

2.3 Disclosures made on the Everyone's Invited website [https://www.everyonesinvited.uk] and subsequent OFSTED Review of Sexual Abuse in Schools and Colleges [Ofsted: 2021] highlighted the level of sexual harassment and gender-based violence experienced by girls and young women and the extent to which 'rape culture' exists both inside and outside of schools.

2.4 Hyper-masculinity and the 'Man Box' tell young men to 'act like a man', to act tough, to stick to rigid gender roles, to be heterosexual, and to use aggression and violence to resolve conflicts. Equally, gender inequality consistently predicts higher rates of violence against girls and women, with boys under pressure to prove their masculinity by objectifying and teasing girls and young women. Moreover, as boys become young men, they're frequently told to "man up" and vulnerable emotions and intimate friendships are for girls and gay men.

'The work was clearly impactful and resulted in some tangible initiatives that we can bring to the table with SLT to induce a culture of greater respect in relationships among students'

Head of Year 9

2.6 Throughout the workshops, the discussions among young men frequently revolved around social media influencer Andrew Tate. Consequently, in response to this interest, supplementary resources were collaboratively created with the students, prior to subsequent arrest in December 2022. These resources aimed to explore various aspects such as Tate's popularity and influence, the concept of hostile-masculinity, his display of aggressive misogyny, and his concerning perspectives regarding mental health.

19% of girls say they don't feel safe at school

Girl Guides [2022] Girls' Attitudes Survey

90% of girls have been sent unsolicited sexually explicit pictures

Ofsted 2021: Rapid Review of Peer-on-Peer Sexual Abuse in Schools

18% of girls have experienced unwanted touching

Girl Guides [2021] It happens all the time

50% of young women say they avoid going out after dark

Girl Guides [2022] Girls' Attitudes Survey

3. Project aims and objectives

3.1 The overarching aims of the project were as follows:
- To ensure young people's voices are at the heart of the sexual bullying and harassment debate
- To explore the root causes of both online and offline gender-based harassment
- To empower young people to advocate for change in their schools and communities

3.2 Themes covered in the workshops included:
- Harmful gender stereotypes including the 'Man Box' and what it means to be a man
- Sexist banter, online and offline sexual bullying, and harassment
- Young men as allies in speaking out and challenging sexual bullying and harassment
- Bystander and Upstander behaviour

3.3 The outcomes for young men taking part in the project were:
- Increased critical thinking skills to better understand the factors underpinning gender stereotypes and sexual harassment toward young women
- Increased awareness of the harmful impact of sexual bullying and harassment in schools
- Enhanced confidence to act as allies to safely stand up and speak out against all forms of sexualised bullying

3.4 The themes covered in the S2R program included:
- Gender stereotypes and gender norms
- Healthy respectful relationships
- Online and offline sexual harassment
- Consensual and non-consensual sharing of intimate pictures
- Advocacy and campaigning

'I thought the workshop was great and the way we discussed sexual harassment really helped me to understand what it looks like from a different perspective'
Year 9 young man

3.5 The outcomes for young women taking part in the project were:
- Increased critical thinking skills to challenge existing notions of gender stereotypes, gender norms and myths surrounding sexual harassment and gender-based violence
- The ability to devise strategies for building healthy respectful relationships and assess safe and unsafe situations
- Enhanced confidence to safely stand up and speak out against offline and online sexual bullying and harassment
- Support young women to recognise and promote their rights to safety and inclusion
- Empowered to become change agents in their schools and communities by speaking out about offline and online sexual bullying and harassment

3.6   There were various reasons why schools said they wanted to take part in the M2M and S2R programs. These included:
- Growing awareness of peer-on-peer abuse and inappropriate sexual behaviour experienced by young women
- Student voice expressing concern over the use of derogatory and sexist language in the last OFSTED
- A need to reinforce and strengthen existing PHRSE learning amongst young men through increased knowledge and skills
- Increasing concerns about Andrew Tate
- Offered targeted support to specific young men on unhealthy and healthy notions of masculinity
- Addressing the concerns among young women about sexual bullying
- Providing young women with the confidence and strategies to deal with the issues and advocate for a better environment

3.7   Educational settings were asked how the programs fit within their Whole School Approach to address harmful sexual behaviors. Their responses included:
- That programs feeds directly into the new PHRSE curriculum and wider Equality, Diversity and Inclusion agenda
- The M2M program gives young men a 'safe space' to voice their concerns and explore ideas, which they might not do in mixed-sex PSHE classes
- They build on previous student voice activities where young women want young men to receive a better education around sexual bullying rather than sanctions
- They support a broader campaign to raise aspirations and confidence among young women
- The intention is to use student feedback to inform RSHE curriculum planning, lessons and assemblies related to harmful sexual behaviours
- They ensure that young women feel they are being heard and have a safe space to speak up regarding these issues
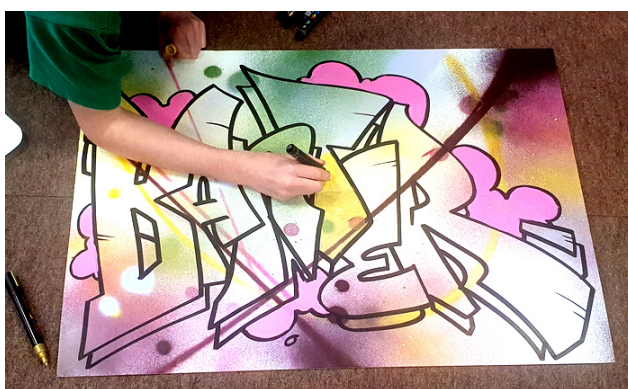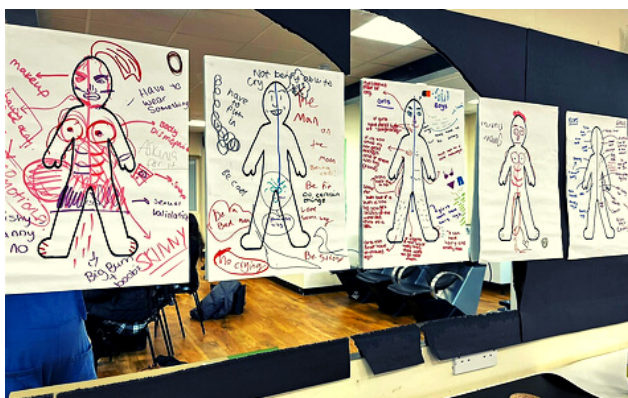
4. Maps to Manhood: key findings

4.1 The M2M program was delivered across 14 educational settings and consisted of 3 half-day workshops, delivered over 3 consecutive weeks, with 154 young men taking part in the program.

4.2 To ensure the effective engagement of young men and maximise the impact of the workshops, schools were provided with guidelines on student recruitment, safeguarding measures, confidentiality protocols, handling potential disclosures, and obtaining parental consent. It was emphasised during initial conversations with schools that the M2M program was not intended for individuals exhibiting challenging behavior or involved in sexualised bullying or harassment.

Taking a gender sensitive approach

4.3   It was essential from the outset to create a safe space for students to talk openly and honestly. This was partly achieved by taking a gender-sensitive approach, though many young men stated that it would have been beneficial to hear young women's perspectives and experiences of sexual bullying and harassment.

4.4 It was interesting to note that many young men said that they were often too embarrassed to speak openly in front of their peers in class on difficult and sensitive issues and that controversial issues were not always managed well during PHRSE lessons or Tutor Time.

4.5   Young men acknowledged that they frequently tended to dominate discussions on topics like sexual bullying and harassment, which resulted in young women feeling excluded and disempowered, with their voices frequently going unheard.

'The workshops were a safe place to talk about risky things we wouldn't normally talk about without getting into an argument'
Year 9 young man

'I enjoyed the workshop as you can ask questions you wouldn't normally feel comfortable to ask'
Year 10 young man

Recruitment

4.6 Careful consideration was given to the recruitment of young men, as one of the main aims of the workshop was to enable young men to feel confident to step up as allies and call out sexual bullying and harassment amongst their peers. However, recruitment initially proved challenging.

4.7   In cases where students were recruited through pastoral support or behaviour leads, it was many young men frequently exhibited challenging behaviour, which often manifested itself in overtly sexist and homophobic attitudes. Many, displayed what can only be described as 'alpha male characteristics' and had a history of involvement in sexual bullying - despite recruitment criteria being discussed with the school, leading to significant difficulties in group dynamics and conversations.

4.8 Within one school, the behavior lead enlisted a cohort of Year 10 students, which included three openly gay and out students. However, unbeknown to the workshop facilitators, one of the participants had a history of engaging in homophobic bullying toward students within the group.

Consequently, this resulted in a reluctance among the young men to openly express themselves due to fears of potential retaliation. It was only at the end of the first workshop that a student disclosed in private their experiences of homophobic bullying. Subsequent conversations with the school and the young man led to the decision that it would be in the best interest of the safety and well-being of other students in the group for him not to participate in the remaining workshops.

4.9   Schools were actively encouraged to recruit older students into the group who were able to offer alternative perspectives and act as positive role models to younger students. Younger students clearly found this helpful and resulted in more meaningful and insightful conversations within the group.

'It was good having Year 10s in the workshop because we got to know more and their opinions'
Year 9 young man

LGBTQ insights, homophobia and experiences of sexual harassment

4.10   Several schools actively recruited LGBTQ and gender-fluid students into the groups. During the first workshop, LGBTQ students frequently offered invaluable and alternative insights into gender norms and society's expectations of '*what it means to be a man*'. However, many also spoke candidly of their experiences of homophobic bullying by their peers.

4.11   This led to several discussions in the groups about how much young men policed each other's behaviours and how the fear of being perceived as 'gay' or 'queer' frequently limited their willingness to share their feelings, particularly around their emotional well-being, or tell each other how much they cared for each other and their friends [see Way.

4.12   Furthermore, although many young men claimed to be accepting of their LGBTQ peers, often homophobic attitudes repeatedly manifested themselves. For instance, a small group of young men, across several schools, said their schools 'focused too much' on LGBTQ issues, potentially overshadowing other matters of equality.

'My dad is homophobic and I am as well. It's got me into trouble at school but I'm not sure coming to this workshop is going to change my mind because I've had 14 years of homophobic attitudes at home'
Year 11 young man

4.13   In the lead-up to Remembrance Sunday, young men were openly critical of the LGBTQ poppy, 'because 'LGBTQ individuals already have Pride month'. Notably, all the young men cited nearly identical arguments, indicating exposure to similar online homophobic content. These views were actively challenged and served as valuable opportunities for learning about both overt and subtle forms of homophobia and the impact of harmful online content.

4.14 Moreover, LGBTQ young men offered invaluable insights into the nature and frequency of sexual bullying and harassment endured by their female friends and were able to challenge the prevailing belief within the groups that sexual bullying and harassment were not problems, either among their peer group or school.

Dealing with disclosures of sexual bullying and harassment

4.15   Although it was not the intention of the workshop facilitators to discuss within the workshops previous or current incidents of sexual bullying or sexual harassment, schools were asked to disclose any relevant past or ongoing incidents in case these were referred to by students.

4.16   Creating an atmosphere of openness and honesty within each group was important, with confidentiality discussed at the beginning of every workshop. This resulted in a climate of trust and led to several previous and current incidents of sexual bullying and sexual harassment being disclosed.

4.17   In one school, an allegation of rape made by a young woman, where there had been police involvement, was raised within the group but this incident had not been disclosed by the school prior to the start of workshops.

4.18   At one school, just before commencing the workshop, the workshop facilitators were informed by a senior staff member regarding an ongoing allegation of sexual harassment. The incident was repeatedly brought up by the group and required careful handling, as the young men clearly wanted guidance on managing the ongoing 'fallout' within their peer groups. It became a really important jumping-off point for several sensitive discussions regarding the effects of sexual harassment and the role of bystander behavior.

4.19   In a number of schools, the Project Team stayed in regular contact with Safeguarding Leads and the Senior Leadership Team between workshops, to address any potential fallout from allegations of sexual bullying and sexual harassment as these were being investigated by the school.

4.20   In addition, a number of incidents that were disclosed during the workshops were also brought to the attention of the Local Authority's Support and Intervention Manager for Safeguarding.

'This was one of the best workshops that I've had the privilege to take part in. Conversations were honest, frank, passionate, constructive, and relatable'

Head of Year 10

Dealing with resistance and pushback

4.21 Schools sought parental consent prior to students taking part in the program and were asked to discuss the program with students beforehand i.e. why they had been chosen to take part. For a variety of reasons, these discussions appeared to have been very limited or hadn't taken place at all with the young men.

4.22 As a result, many attended the first workshop with the impression that they had already been labeled as 'perpetrators' by their school. Consequently, the initial encounter was one of suspicion, and much of the first workshop was spent building trust and offering reassurances to the young men.

4.23 In nearly every setting, young men expressed a deep sense of unfairness about how young women now had more rights than men, a feeling of male victimisation, and being 'targeted' by feminism [Global Boyhood Initiative: 2023]. It was within this context individuals such as Andrew Tate are able to resonate with young men. Moreover, these discussions echoed those commonly found within the Men's Rights Movement and the 'manosphere,' where young men felt under attack and believed that anti-male discrimination was prevalent. While it was important to acknowledge these feelings, this quickly led to several discussions about:
- Healthy and unhealthy masculinities and the use of the term 'hostile masculinity'
- The lack of positive role models young men have on their path to healthy manhood

4.24 Throughout the workshops, there was constant 'pushback' from young men when confronted with statistics and data regarding young women's experiences with sexual banter, sexual harassment, and gender-based violence. Young men frequently dismissed or attempted to discredit the statistics or the issue itself. Even in instances where they acknowledged such behaviours occurring within their own schools or among their peers, they were prone to quickly rationalise it by resorting to "victim blaming" young women.

4.25 Another strategy frequently adopted by young men to distance themselves from young women's experiences of gender-based violence was to insist such behaviours were only engaged in by *'weirdos'* and *'paedos'* even where there was clear evidence within their own groups of evidence to the contrary. For example, several groups spoke openly of instances where peers had deliberately shared 'nudes' of young women in their schools and the repercussions experienced by young women such as and 'slut shaming'.

'It was helpful talking about myths and stereotypes and how we say and do stuff without even realising we're victim-blaming'

Year 9 young man

4.26 A troubling myth prevalent among many young men was the belief in the frequency of false allegations of sexual assaults and rapes made by women. Despite the fact that such cases are rare, accounting for only 2%-6% according to CPS (20219), many insisted that the rates were much higher,

ranging from 40% to 60% or even more. These misconceptions were promptly challenged and resulted in in-depth discussions about the issue of under-reporting of sexual assaults and rapes, extremely rare instances of false allegations, media representations of such cases, and victim-blaming.

Eliciting empathy

4.27   A demonstrated approach to tackle resistance and opposition is to foster empathy in young men by facilitating their understanding of the experiences of young women regarding sexual bullying and its detrimental effects. This strategy has been found to have a significant impact, as noted by Flood (2020). This was achieved using several carefully selected resources, including the award-winning film *Now I can Breathe*, together with the Rape Culture Pyramid activity [see Next Gen Manual 2022].

Bystander behaviour

4.28 The final workshop explored how young men might bring about positive change in their school by being an ally or by actively taking a stand against sexual harassment and bullying and safely calling out such behaviour. However, many young men spoke of the potential difficulties and dangers, that were examined in detail int he workshop

4.29   Young men explored bystander behaviours [see Salmivalli et al: 2010] and the barriers that often prevent them from standing up and speaking out. The three main reasons for not intervening included:
- Fear of being called a 'grass' or 'snitch' by their peers
- Fear of retaliation or retribution
- Not wanting to get involved (unless it was someone they knew personally)

4.30 Young men spoke of the potential risks associated with intervening in such incidents, including personal safety and the potential impact on their reputation among peers. While some acknowledged that it might be more manageable to call out a friend, others expressed hesitation due to the fear of jeopardising their friendships and getting their friends into trouble.

4.31 Moreover, there was an unwillingness to openly call out sexual harassment or bullying if the person engaging in such behaivour was deemed to be 'popular' as they ran the risk of being ostracised by their peers.

'I think that the video [*Now I Can Breathe*] was the most important thing in the workshop today. It was difficult talking about it afterwards because she was so young when some of the things happened to her'
Year 9 young man

'The bystander activities provoked some fascinating discussions about personal responsibility and accountability and I even questioned some of my own thinking and behaviours'
Curriculum Lead

'When it's a friend that's doing it [*sexual harassment*] that's different because you know if you report it there's going to be serious fallout for them'
Year 8 young man

4.32 Being an active bystander means recognising when someone's behaviour is inappropriate or threatening and choosing to safely challenge it. Young men were invited to examine a range of intervention strategies and apply these to several scenarios.

4.33 It was during these conversations young men spoke openly of incidents where they, or their friends, had confronted those accused of engaging in sexual harassment, where they used violence to exact retribution. These incidents had often taken place outside of school, where police had sometimes been involved.

Tate Speech or Hate Speech

4.34 From the outset of this project, the social media influencer Andrew Tate was a frequent topic of conversation among young men. His removal and reinstatement from social media platforms, and arrest in late December 2022, only served to fuel these conversations.

4.35 To address the concerns about his negative influence on young men, an additional standalone resource was co-produced and piloted with female and male students in two schools and disseminated via the PHRSE Hub in East Sussex and wider.

4.36 The key aims of the workshop were to engage, educate, and empower young men to challenge harmful gender stereotypes and develop critical thinking skills around harmful online content.

4.37 During the workshops, many young men said that they were able to *'filter out and see past the dangerous and unpleasant stuff'* but weren't often given the time or space to articulate this in school, as conversations were quickly being closed down by adults.

4.38 Yet it was evident in a very small number of cases, young men had taken on his misogynistic views. As a result, the Andrew Tate workshops offered an invaluable opportunity for these young men to hear an alternative narrative and positive peer challenge, which many hadn't previously heard.

'I liked that our views were challenged and we got to see it from other people's perspectives'

Year 10 young man attending co-production workshop

'I've learnt more in this workshop than in 20 PSHE lessons'

Year 11 young woman attending co-production workshop

'Why is there a blank space in our PSHE lessons for these conversations?'

Year 10 young man attending co-production workshop

'The workshop was pitched brilliantly for the boys. You clearly did your research on Andrew Tate which not only enabled you to discuss the issues in a credible and appropriate way with them but offered an alternative viewpoint that challenged much of their thinking'

Head of Year 10

5. Steps to Respect: key findings

5.1 The Steps to Respect program was delivered across 8 educational settings with 165 young women, offering a safe space to explore their perceptions and experiences of sexual bullying and harassment.

Recruitment

5.2 A common characteristic amongst young women attending the workshops was that many had experienced sexual bullying and harassment, which they frequently referred to during the workshops. However, the workshop facilitators were sometimes only told about young women's experiences only moments before the workshop started.

5.3 In several instances, these had resulted in police involvement and/or permanent exclusion of young men who had engaged in such behaviours. Equally, young women spoke of incidents of sexual bullying and harassment, where young men had remained at their school, and how stressful and upsetting this was for them.

A safe space to talk and participate

5.4 A key focus of the initial workshop was to build a safe and trusting space. Young women were open to setting a group contract and quickly relaxed once the focus of the workshops was explained in more detail i.e. they were there because they had important insights their school could learn from and act as change agents by informing policies and procedures around sexual bullying and harassment in their schools.

5.5 However, it was made explicit from the outset, that young women were under no pressure to speak about their lived experiences of sexual bullying or harassment, but if they did, they could do so anonymously.

5.6 It was evident from the outset, young women wanted to use the workshops as an opportunity to explore and then find closure on certain incidents of sexual harassment and bullying they had experienced..

'Nicola and Kirsty were fantastic facilitators. They worked really well together to engage the students and give them a voice. They made all the activities really come alive'

School social worker

'We need more groups like this so we can have closure about stuff that's happened'

Year 10 young woman

'You can say what you want in these workshops without feeling embarrassed or judged'

Year 9 young woman

5.7 In almost every setting, conversations clustered around several common themes:
- The over-policing of girls' school uniforms by male staff and their peers
- Inappropriate comments made by male staff regarding their school uniform that perpetuated and reinforced dangerous myths about victim blaming and sexual assaults
- Privacy surrounding the use of toilets
- Internalised misogyny and bullying amongst groups of young women within the schools

5.8 Whilst members of staff were invited to sit in on the workshops and participate, many chose to sit on the periphery. However, it was felt that when staff did take part they sometimes attempted to minimise issues young women were raising. Although groups sometimes posed difficult challenges to their school, staff often conceded there was a need for more staff training on the specifics, including wider equality issues, sexual bullying, and a culture of misogyny within their schools.

5.9 In one group, conversations guided by the school, centred around the influence exerted by young women within the group on other female students to wear shorter skirts. However, the young women strongly objected to this, perceiving it as a complete diversion from the real issue. They felt that the focus should be on addressing the sexualised and inappropriate comments they had encountered from male students and male staff. Moreover, many said they lacked the confidence to report such comments. When this was discussed in more detail, the young women, stated that the male staff who had made the comments had now left their school.

5.10 It was evident in certain schools that the way the school uniform was being policed was creating a school climate where young women were left feeling vulnerable, whilst fostering a 'them and us' attitude between staff and female students.

5.11 Female toilets proved a contentious issue in many schools. Examples were given where:
- Toilets being locked and the difficulty to use them when they were on their periods
- A lack of privacy using the toilets because the school had removed doors from the toilets
- Male staff entering female toilets

Defining sexualised bullying

Sexual bullying is characterised as 'any bullying behaviour with a sexual element'. It can include:
- sexual comments including banter
- body shaming
- unwanted physical contact
- interfering with clothing
- putting pressure on someone to be in a relationship
- spreading rumours of a sexual nature
- 'upskirting' or 'cyber flashing'
- sending sexual material including pornography
- 'outing' someone online
- threatening to send or 'leak' nudes

Anti-Bullying Alliance: 2020

'I've had a male teacher commenting that I'm "asking for it" if I wear a short skirt'
Year 11 young woman

'Male teachers will physically touch me if they think my skirt is too short and pull it down lower'
Year 10 young woman

'The school wants us to express ourselves but they're lying because they have so many rules about skirt length, hair and jewellery... it's just a lie'
Year 10 young woman

Using creative methods to engage

5.12 The project used several evidence-based methods to creatively engage young people. For example, we used urban arts and graffiti to support and co-produce a 'charter for change' in many schools and interactive role-play to explore sexual harassment and bullying, and bystander behaviour.

Theatre of the Opppresed

5.13 Theatre of the Oppressed (TotO) techniques were used with young women to examine and unpack multiple themes throughout the workshops. For example:
- **Week 1 –** Introducing the group to TotO concepts to explore gender inequality and harmful gender stereotypes
- **Week 2 –** Creating (co-writing and presenting) scenarios that examined sexual bullying and 'misogyny'
- **Week 3 –** Exploring bystander behaviour, safe intervention strategies, and advocacy.

5.14 All of the young women in the groups were able to draw upon their lived experiences of sexual harassment and bullying, which meant scenarios often resonated deeply. A reoccurring trope identified in several groups was the *'damned if you do and damned if you don't'* dilemma in terms of their perceived sexual activity and the associated 'double standards' where young men were often seen as 'legends' for sleeping around and young women sluts. These themes were explored in detail using TotO role play.

5.15 In another group, young women scripted a scene featuring a girl on the bus going home and a man sitting next to her. Without asking he puts his hand on her knee. The girl's opening line was: *'sorry, I don't want you to do that'.* This acted as an important jumping-off point for more in-depth conversation and led the group:
- to explore consent
- why women felt the need to immediately apologise before saying no,
- internalised passivity instilled in girls from a very early age,
- self-assertiveness.

5.16 In another group, unbeknown to the workshop facilitators, there had been a serious incident of sexual bullying between two young

Benefits of using TotO
- Useful when working with vulnerable and/or disempowered groups
- Offers creative ways to explore challenging or difficult issues including sexualised bullying
- Provides different insights and understanding of the power dynamics associated with sexualised bullying
- Empowers young women to safely stand up and speak out on these issues

'It felt empowering to be around other strong-minded women'
Year 10 young woman

women regarding the spreading of rumours of a sexual nature, that hadn't been resolved and was clearly impacting the group dynamics.

5.17 The young woman being bullied spoke openly about the negative impact of the bullying, as she had only recently started at the school. This immediately elicited empathy from the rest of the group. They used TotO role play to explore what it meant to be an ally for each other, sisterhood and solidarity which then filtered into their final drama presentation.

5.18 Each group explored bystander and upstander behaviour and examined where young women felt most threatened. This included the school cafeteria, corridors, on the bus to and from school, walking home, and in their communities. Each group then examined practical solutions to bring about change, which was then acted out using TotO techniques.

Pick Me Girl

5.19   Young women spoke openly about the 'Pick Me Girl' trend and how such girls, who were deemed to have bought into this trend were often perceived negatively within their peer group.

5.20   Although young women didn't call this out explicitly as a form of internalised misogyny, the consequence was that young women in the school were clearly judging and policing each other's behaviour.

5.21 Moreover, whilst those in the group were highly critical of 'Pick Me Girls', they could quite easily be accused of projecting their own internalised misogyny onto other young women, as some openly 'victim blamed' 'Pick Me Girls' when talking about sexual harassment and sexualised bullying.

The Girl Code

Pick Me Girl

The concept of a 'pick me girl' refers to a person, who seeks validation and attention from men by adhering to societal expectations and stereotypes. The term is often used to describe someone who goes to great lengths to differentiate themselves from other women and gain the approval of men. They may express disdain for feminism, distance themselves from female empowerment movements, and perpetuate harmful stereotypes about women to be perceived as more desirable to men.

5.22 Young women were often chosen to take part in the workshop because they were seen as popular and influential amongst their peers. Young women discussed how this could be used in either a positive or negative way. This led to reflecting on how notions of the 'Pick Me Girl' fed in stereotypical narratives of young women spreading rumours and bullying each other, as well as 'slut shaming' and 'victim blaming' that needed to be replaced with young women being seen as supportive and positive role models for each other.

5.23 Each group was invited to write their own 'Girl Code' about the Do's and Don't's of being a good friend and positive role model. Several common themes were identified:
- DTB which stood for 'Don't Trust Bitches' was changed to 'Do Trust Besties'
- Always have each other's backs
- No girl gets left behind when going to parties
- Dealing with gossip
- Choose friends over relationships
- Be direct with each other – be honest and straight up
- Ask for help and provide help to others
- Talk to people you trust and be a person who can be trusted
- Look after each other and check in regularly

6. Impact

6.1 A Project Evaluation Plan was put in place to support learning and measure the impact of a project. This included:
- Collection of verbal and written feedback from young people at the end of each workshop
- The completion of a final evaluation to evidence progress made by young people against a set of identified outcomes
- An external evaluation by colleagues in Public Health with each educational setting following completion of the program

6.2 A total of fifteen educational settings offered feedback following the completion of the workshops that comprised of a telephone interview with school staff who supported or took part in the workshops. This is outlined in detail below

Insights and learning

6.3 **From participation in the M2M and S2R programs, what one insight or piece of learning stood out to you the most?**
- The fact that young men actually want to make a change and support young women when they are discriminated against
- The insight into Bystander Behaviour and how certain behaviours engaged in by young men fall into this category that they were not aware of
- The recognition and awareness among young men about how the language they use can negatively impact on those around them i.e. sexist banter and homophobic slurs
- The importance of giving women a safe space to work together and how powerful this can be .
- An understanding of the role of being the bystander i.e. seeing something but doing nothing
- The difference between 'grassing' and reporting and looking at it from the perspective of protecting your friend rather than trying to get them into trouble

Young people's learning

6.4 **What do you feel young people gained from participating in the programs?**
- A better understanding of how to treat each other and the opposite sex, and the importance of being respectful of other people's life choices
- Young women felt heard and seen and had the chance to influence the priorities of the school
- Confidence and understanding that certain behaviours are not okay

'It was one of my proudest moments to see these young men become more grounded in front of my eyes'

Head of Year

'Young men found it incredibly worthwhile. They now realise that this type of behaviour *[sexual bullying]* is not the norm and understand the external pressures placed upon them to think and 'act like a man"

Head of Year

Changes in attitudes and behaviours

6.5 Following their participation in the programs, have you noticed any changes in their attitudes or behaviours regarding the topics covered by the workshops?

- Now we are covering the *'safe and sound'* work with Year 9, the young men are more engaged in lessons and are really using their knowledge to participate in discussions
- Within PSHE lessons there is much more discussion and challenging of opinions from all students. The young men have become more vocal in challenging their peers within the safety of classes, but still feel unsure about doing this in the corridors and playground, something which the school continues to develop
- A continuation of the conversation which you can see at lunchtime and in corridors with students asking teachers more questions.
- Bystander effect - students are very much more aware of this in their minds
- Young women have contributed their feedback and thoughts to the RSHE team and these are now being worked into the lessons

Youth-led activities

6.6 Are there any actions that young people plan to take forward within the school?

- We are currently discussing how this can be done through School Council
- To create a single-sex *feeling safe* group for both boys and girls
- Young men involved in the program continue to move into leadership roles around the school i.e. prefects, mentors, student council
- None are clear at the moment but as a school, we are aware that we need to consider that students require more support around these issues
- Young men have asked for a better school reporting system that students can use to report any incidents
- Students want the school to update their uniform policy to allow students to express themselves i.e. through clothing, make-up or jewelry as they feel this does not impact learning

'Students want us to communicate how we currently respond to incidents and that all reports will be dealt with quickly'

School Action

6.7 Are there any actions that the school plan to take forward?
- Planned assemblies with staff sharing positive role models to counter Andrew Tate and his influence by swamping students with positivity. It seems to be having a positive effect
- The students asked for better PSHCE lessons which have been actioned
- Making school-specific resources using the #EmbraceEquity for International Women's Day 2023 with student-led assemblies
- We have increased small-group work for all genders
- Adapting existing processes i.e. safe spaces at lunchtimes

PHRSE provision and delivery

**6.8 How will the M2M and S2R programs influence future PSHE provision and delivery?**
- Additional lessons on the use of language and Andrew Tate.
- Training for our RSHE teachers more rigorously before they teach RSHE
- Updated schemes of work
- Additional lessons have already been added for all year groups within PSHE to revisit sexual harassment
- Removal of the term 'toxic masculinity' and exploring more broadly what it feels like to be a man
- Existing PSHE lessons on prejudice and inclusion have now adapted with some of the resources from the workshops

What next?

6.9 Does the school plan to implement anything else to facilitate similar discussions with students?
- We would like to do something similar but have little capacity
- To use the PSHCE lessons for discussion
- Possible additional workshops depending on the cost
- Plan workshops for other year groups
- Whole school CPD on how to identify and challenge behaviour is being planned
- Have booked Steps to Respect in Term 6
- Develop a mentoring program in a more structured way to support other students
- We will train 8 members of staff to deliver the workshops working with Heads of Years to do it on a referral basis with a careful matching of staff with young people

*'Young people created a 'charter' for change that we aim to action from September 2023 '*
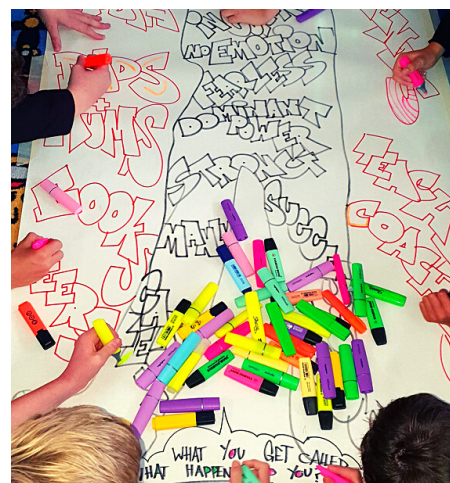
Feedback from young people

6.10 Several creative feedback methods were used to gather the views of young people taking part in the programs to measure the extent to which key outcome measures were achieved.

6.11 Feedback was gathered at the end of each workshop which was shared with schools so they could see young people's learning journey and provided a continuous feedback loop that informed the workshop content and delivery.

6.13 A total of 107 evaluation forms were completed by young men and 40 by young women at the end of the last workshop. The findings are outlined below.
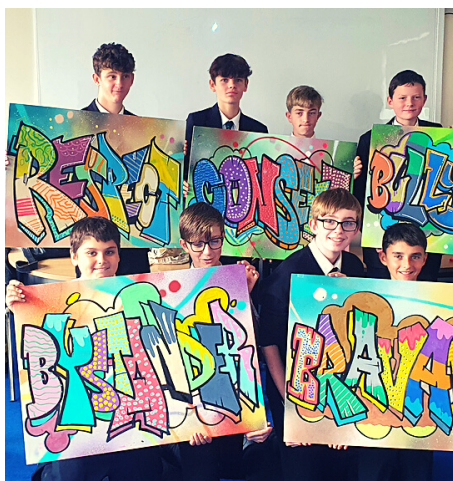
97% — **said they felt respected and listened to during the workshops**

94% — **rated the workshops as either excellent or good**
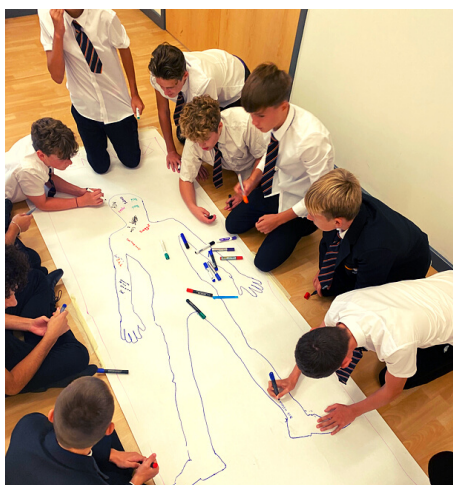
90% — **said they were better able to challenge gender stereotypes and myths surrounding sexual bullying**

87% — **felt more confident standing up and speaking out against sexual bullying after the workshops**

86% — **felt more confident standing up and speaking out against sexual bullying after the workshops**

7. Conclusions

7.1 This project offered a real insight into young people's perceptions and understanding of sexual bullying and sexual harassment. While there were many breakthrough moments with young men, the workshops were sometimes defined by resistance and pushback, and a reluctance by young men to fully accept the true nature and extent of the problem amongst their female peers.

7.2 The work frequently acted as a vital jumping-off point for schools, in terms of understanding the importance of providing a safe space for young women to talk openly about their lived experiences of sexual bullying and sexual harassment and the difficulties of working with young men when challenging harmful gender stereotypes and myths surrounding sexual bullying and sexual harassment.

Steps to Repect

Key findings
- More opportunities and safe spaces to talk about sexual bullying in school
- Offer gender-specific workshops and programs for young women and men
- Student-led approaches to raise awareness about sexual bullying

Maps to Manhood

Key findings
- Be prepared for resistance and pushback
- Provide positive male roles models to run workshops to support young men
- Greater emphasis on mobilising young men as allies for collective action

Whole school approaches

Key findings
- A need for training to increase confidence when responding to disclosures
- Several pathways for reporting sexual bullying
- High-quality PHRSE and Sex Education that is relevant and relatable

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