

FPS Forensic Psychological Services

Executive Summary of the Tender Healthy Relationships Project – National Partnership Programme

A study commissioned by Tender Education and Arts and funded by:

The Big Lottery Reaching Communities Fund

The Paul Hamlyn Foundation

The John Ellerman Foundation

The Lankellychase Foundation

Erin Sanders-McDonagh

Shola Apena Rogers

Miranda Horvath

Sarah Selwood

With research assistance from Chloe Borthwick, Matt Cracknell, Charlita Hall, Julia Magnus-George, Caroline Morrison, Caitlyn O’Neil, Aishah Piprawala, Maria Scally, and Pallavi Thota

Background

The Tender Healthy Relationships Project uses theatre and the arts to engage young people in violence prevention, enabling them to recognise and avoid abuse and violence. Tender has worked with thousands of young people and professionals: challenging attitudes which tolerate, condone and normalise violence educating about positive, healthy relationships and creating supportive, abuse-free communities.

The Tender Healthy Relationships Project is a prevention programme with an element of peer-education, employing a unique drama-based model of healthy relationship education that engages whole schools in teacher training, practical workshops for pupils and peer-to-peer education. From a pool of almost 100 organisations that expressed an interest to become a partner with Tender, formal partnerships were established with four to deliver the project in four regions alongside Tender, who delivered in London. The other partners are: Peer Productions (Surrey); Soft Touch (Leicester); Relate North Essex and East Herts/ Essex Change (Essex); and Liverpool John Moores University (Liverpool). In assessing the efficacy of the Tender Healthy Relationships project, an evaluation was commissioned which collected data before and after the intervention took place. The project and evaluation were fully funded by the Big Lottery Reaching Communities Fund, the Paul Hamlyn Foundation, the John Ellerman Foundation, and the Lankelly Chase Foundation.

Objectives

The evaluation has two objectives focused on the Healthy Relationships Project implementation:

- 1) Does the Healthy Relationships project make a difference in terms of young people's knowledge about violence in relationships?**

We explore this issue in relation to young people who are active participants in the workshop, as well as young people in schools who attend and watch a sharing/presentation put on by their peers. We also ask teachers and staff in the schools about the impact of the workshops on the students who engage with the programme.

2) Have the workshops been implemented effectively by all the partners?

We explore this issue by gathering information from the partners about the first and second year of delivery, but also by speaking to teachers and professionals in schools about the process of working with partners around the project.

Methodology and Analysis

In order to ascertain the impact of the Tender Healthy Relationships Project and the delivery process, a mixed methods approach was undertaken.

Quantitative Elements

The Tender Healthy Relationships Project reached a wide range of young people and educators across the country. In total, the project was delivered in **90 schools**, **2050 students** engaged with the workshop element, **15,404 students** watched the drama performances, and **1,843 educational staff** were trained during INSET sessions.

The quantitative element of the evaluation consisted of four different strands:

- Young people in each school receiving the Tender Healthy Relationships Project were invited to complete pre and post intervention evaluation forms to compare attitudes and knowledge before and after the intervention. This included topics such as their knowledge of the nature and effects of domestic abuse and some gender-specific questions. Pre and post questionnaires were analysed for 1378 young people who were involved in the drama-based workshops (referred to from this point forward as Workshop Questionnaires).
- Post-performance questionnaires were immediately administered to the 8017 young people who had been in the audience (referred to from this point forward as Audience Questionnaires) to gauge their understanding of the topics about domestic abuse which were addressed in performances.
- Pre and post intervention questionnaires with 87 relevant teaching staff (including, but not limited to assistant heads, PSHE teachers, drama teachers, and a range of learning support staff) were carried out in order to understand teaching professionals' experiences with students' behaviours and attitudes in

relation to domestic abuse and healthy relationships (referred to from this point forward as Teacher Questionnaires).

- INSET training questionnaires were administered to all 780 staff taking part in an INSET training session (1 hour long) led by the partner organisations (referred to from this point forward as INSET Questionnaires).

Qualitative Elements

Focus groups were conducted with young people during Year 1 and Year 2 of the project: ten focus groups with young people (n= 194) from two schools in each of the five areas who had taken part in the workshops. The focus groups were conducted after the workshops were delivered, and the performance had taken place. Semi-structured interviews were also conducted in each of the three years with 39 teachers and teaching professionals who were involved in the delivery of the project.

For Year 3 we introduced a new framework for the qualitative data collection, which included follow up interviews with young people who had taken part in the workshops at the start of the project (from September 2012-December 2013) to provide insights into the longer term impacts of the project. We had hoped to interview between 15-20 students across the partner areas, although ultimately only two focus groups (n=7) were achieved. Due to the low numbers of participants, the data from the qualitative elements for young people in Year 3 have not been included in the final report.

As the qualitative data from teacher interviews and focus groups were also saturated by the end of Year 2, we therefore conducted 6 interviews with members of staff from a range of schools across the intervention areas, where workshops ran in either 2012-2013 or the first term of the 2013 school year. Teachers were asked to reflect on their students' experiences of taking part in the workshops – thinking about how they reacted to the workshops at the time, and the extent to which they thought attitudes or behaviours might have shifted. We also conducted semi-structured telephone interviews with partners in each of the five areas, in order to elicit as much information about the process of delivery as possible.

Focus group discussions and interviews were analysed thematically, in order to gain insight into experiences and the impact of the Tender Healthy Relationships Project.

Impact of the Tender Healthy Relationships Project on students

The Tender Healthy Relationships Project engages young people around a number of key areas related to violence and abuse; the data collected from young people evidences a number of key statistical changes in their knowledge and attitudes around the issue.

Statistically Significant Changes Post Intervention

- Participants' knowledge on the prevalence of domestic violence significantly increased ($p=.000$)
- Participants revealed an increased awareness about domestic violence as an issue of coercion and control ($p=.000$)
- Participants were more aware that women are more likely to experience domestic abuse ($p=.000$ for male participants and $p=.001$ for female participants)

Students in workshops demonstrated their increased understanding of the issue of abuse in the context of relationships by naming the different types, providing practical examples of what types of abuse might occur, distinguishing between healthy and unhealthy relationships and who is primarily affected by violence.

Excerpts from Student Focus Groups

'I told my mum that two women are killed each week by partners or ex-partners in the UK. She was quite shocked when I said it and she didn't think it was that many. Even before I knew about it, I didn't think it would be that many, it shocked me a lot.' Student, Area 2

'It is not always their choice to stay in it, sometimes it is the pressure of the partner saying "I'll kill you if you leave"... so it makes me feel that it's not always their fault. I used to think they should just leave the relationship, but now I understand why they feel they can't.' Student, Area 2

'I learnt where to go if I got raped or abused.' Student, Area 5

'I liked learning the early warning signs because you never know what might happen – that might actually happen.' Student, Area 7

Impact on Students: Teachers' Experience of the Project

INSET training sessions were valued by schools, and in areas where INSET sessions and delivery of projects was taken seriously at a school-wide level, the messages from the workshops were applied in a holistic manner. Teaching staff across different schools felt that the INSET gave them an insight into the issues that young people might face in relationships. Analysis of INSET questionnaire findings from across all three years (n=1080) suggest that teaching staff who took part in the INSET training felt that they had increased their knowledge of issues related to violence against women and girls, felt more confident in dealing with key issues related to violence and sexual bullying, and many felt that they could introduce these topics into future schemes of work.

Feedback from teachers who had observed the workshop sessions was collected both in a pre and post survey (n=88), as well as in interviews and focus groups across the areas during the course of the evaluation. Data

from the pre and post measures are not robust enough to reveal statistically significant changes, but there was a clear sense from both these measures and the qualitative elements that teachers were positive about the workshops, and many had noticed changes in the young people taking part. In particular, educators noticed an increased confidence and empathy from young people, as well as increase in knowledge relating to healthy relationships and domestic violence.

Excerpts from Teacher Interviews

'The students have gained confidence in themselves and in doing this have become more confident students'. Teacher, Area 2

'They have become very sensitive and thoughtful with the subject opinions with their choice of characters'. Teacher, Area 1

'I have watched them grow significantly; they appear more confident in themselves and proud to be able to help others'. Teacher, Area 2

'They now know exactly where to go if they need to talk to somebody. They recognise signs for unhealthy relationships'. Teacher, Area 5

Effective Implementation of the Partnership Project

Key learning points

- Students should be selected to take part in the workshops on the basis of confidence and ability to communicate messages, which fits with the criteria for a successful peer-to-peer education programme.
- Filming and presenting the performance on DVD is an effective way of reaching a larger number of students.

- Ensuring that schools were aware of the time involved in the project and that they can effectively manage the process alongside the partner seems critical for the success of the delivery.
- It is essential that there are clear indications in either the manual or in the training of the Tender Healthy Relationships Project about the focus of the workshops, and that as far as possible issues outside of the core themes are not directly introduced or encouraged by the facilitators.
- Issues that affect young men specifically, or the ways that violence manifests itself in same-sex relationships is not something that is covered in-depth in the Tender material.
- Often the messages put forward are 'negative' in the sense that they focus on violent relationships, but less on how to create or develop 'healthy' relationships. Therefore a change in perspective is needed to ensure a more positive approach to the messages given.
- Partners that had previous experience of working with domestic violence were able to introduce the drama elements with ease, although partners who engaged with relevant groups and organisations in the local area helped elucidate issues that are going on in particular communities.

Recommendations

The evaluation process has highlighted a number of recommendations that we would encourage Tender to incorporate, outlined below:

- 1) While building and developing relationships with new schools is essential to expanding the Healthy Relationships Project, growing and sustaining existing relationships provides a more holistic and long-term way of integrating key messages across different cohorts of students. As such, we would recommend that schools commit to the delivery of the project across a number of years, and consider the Healthy Relationships Project as a long-term collaboration.
- 2) Schools that take a holistic approach to engaging with the project seem to have a more positive experience of the project, with both students and teachers able to discuss these issues within the school setting. While it may not be possible in every school, it might be useful to suggest to schools that a more integrated approach may help deliver messages more effectively. School-wide approaches to addressing bullying and problematic student behaviour have been successful in North America and the UK, and may have a positive impact on student learning and creating safe environments (Chapman & Hofweber, 2000; Colvin & Fernandez, 2000; Horner & Sugai, 2000). Holistic approaches to education

also have greater impacts in relation to changes in attitude and behaviour (Ballantyne and Packer, 2005) – as such this provides further incentive for schools to adopt the project over a number of years, and to recognize the value of incorporating key elements from the model into learning and teaching practices. We would argue that a holistic and sustained introduction of the Healthy Relationship Project may have positive impacts on students' understandings of the key messages, and allow for the continuation of safe spaces for students to talk and discuss related issues.

- 3) It may be worth considering how to include issues that focus more on healthy relationships – developing positive messages and specific guidance for young people on how to manage this. While young people demonstrated increase in knowledge around violence, a focus on healthy aspects of relationships and how better to develop these are equally important, and should be a focus of the project. While there is a clear need to discuss domestic abuse and how this impacts young women, finding ways to help young men and women think critically about their own experiences, and how to *build* a healthy relationship may be useful.
- 4) While the material and delivery of the Tender project goes some way to addressing issues of violence within same-sex relationships and there was an indication from some young people that same-sex relationships and same-sex relationship violence had been discussed, we would suggest that the way that relationships are framed in much of the material adopts a heteronormative approach – in line with other suggestions that prevention programmes need to recognize the experiences of LGBTQI young people (Manship & Perry, 2012). While it can be difficult for young people to discuss their sexuality openly, we suggest that Tender develop materials that specifically and purposefully address same-sex relationship violence, possibly working with a LGBTQI third sector organization that may be able to assist in making the focus more inclusive.
- 5) Research from Stanley et al. (2015) makes clear that students with personal experience of domestic violence are less likely to engage fully with prevention programmes. In line with this, and based on the findings from the evaluation, we recommend that the selection of student performers should be based on their ability to perform confidently, and to be able to act as peer educators following the conclusion of the project. Partners should be given specific details about how to develop students into these roles,

and schools should be given guidance about how to support these people. Tender may want to consider developing a specific training programme in conjunction with specialists in schools around this issue – to help schools meet the needs of young men or women who are experiencing or are vulnerable to these issues.

- 6) While there are ethical questions about the absence of parental decision-making in relation to the inclusion of young people in the project that need to be considered, there is also a strong argument for including parents in discussions about these issues (c.f. Stanley et al. 2015) and including them in discussions about how to help young people develop healthy relationships. We would strongly encourage Tender to require that all schools seek permission from parents before allowing young people to take part, and further, to develop specific material for parents so that discussions about healthy relationship choices can continue at home.
- 7) While the findings from the evaluation demonstrate that the project has significant impact on young people's knowledge of key issues about violence against women and girls, it is hard to determine how well young people retain this knowledge, and the extent to which it might impact on behaviour. While we were not able to capture long-term impacts in this evaluation, we would encourage Tender to continue to develop their evaluation framework to try to assess this, perhaps working alongside schools where there is an established relationship with teachers/educational staff to understand longer term impacts.
- 8) Finally, we suggest that a specific training programme for partners be developed, alongside a more detailed manual which focuses on both the drama and content delivery. Going forward, Tender should develop tools to ensure that facilitators are trained to deliver the Healthy Relationships Project, and that they adhere as closely as possible to the material in the manual to ensure that key messages are delivered in line with Tender's ethos.