

A Local approach to ending violence against women and girls

Helen Mott, Bristol Fawcett 8-11-12

Thank you so much to the other speakers on the panel today.

I am sure that after hearing what they have all had to say, there cannot be any room for doubt about the scale of the problem that we face. And that's the point really, that we need to face it.

Bristol is bursting with skilled, motivated, specialists and educators who know what the issues we need to address are, who are passionate about those issues, and who know the best ways to address them. I'm going to be filling in a little bit more for you about Bristol's strategic approach to violence and abuse against women and girls, and about the resources that we have in the city when it comes to getting the message out in schools.

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- ★ Local work to end Violence and Abuse against Women and Girls (VAAWG)
- ★ Why tackling VAAWG in schools is an issue that goes wider than schools
- ★ What needs to be done to make Bristol a safe and equal city

I'm going to describe how we take a city-wide approach to these issues including the crucial role that schools have to play, and then I want to look at things from the perspective of schools, given what we know including the results of the survey, and think about what needs to be done and how best we can both challenge and support our schools to become UK leaders in tackling violence and abuse, and in ending the culture of silence and denial that allows abusers to carry on with that behaviour.

Local work to end Violence and Abuse against Women and Girls (VAAWG)

- **Work in Bristol Schools**
 - PSHE/SRE teachers
 - PSHE/SRE lessons
 - Extension lessons
 - Training
 - Whole school approach
- **Strategy and leadership**

And so first, let's look at how things currently work in Bristol's schools, and it's important to note here that I am only really talking about schools in the State sector – that is, state funded Local Authority run schools of which we currently have around 20 when it comes to secondary provision, a lot more at primary level. I think it is right to say that Bristol has the highest proportion of children in private education outside of London – there are a lot of independent schools out there who at the moment are not part of this picture – because they have fallen outside the remit of Local Authority funded work, and of course, with the move to academy status and free schools we are on a journey that will see the role of the local authority, as well as its powers, significantly minimised. If we have the resources and the leadership that we need, this can actually be seen as an opportunity to widen the reach of the expertise we have in our city, to create an offer that extends to *all* of our schools and young people – after all, boys in private schools are just as in need of help understanding what consent in sexual relationships means, and girls in Free Schools are just as entitled to understanding what their equal human rights mean, as children in LA provided education are.

Something that I've learned in recent years which is an incredibly important principle to grasp, is that you cannot teach about healthy relationships or Forced Marriage or speaking out against abuse, in the same way that you can teach French verbs or jolly phonics or quantum physics. It's a real, specialist, extra skill to be able to work with young people exploring these sensitive, difficult, emotionally charged, areas – and that is why our Government supported (by that I mean funded) specialist training and certification for teachers in PSHE. And that's why, if we want PSHE to be effective, we need to ensure that it is taught by the teachers who have the skills, the confidence and the knowledge to do it well. In Bristol this is well recognised, and our schools have been

encouraged to send their teachers to obtain the certificate in PSHE and as you can see, Bristol has trained almost 250 of its teachers on its specialist PSHE certification course.

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BRISTOL CERTIFICATE OF TEACHING PSHE

Number of schools with at least one teacher who has a certificate of teaching PSHE

Schools	Number of Schools in Bristol	Number of schools with certificated teacher	% of Bristol schools with a certificated teacher
Secondary	20	19	95%
Special/PRU Secondary	12	10	83%
Total Secondary	32	30	94%
Total Primary Schools and Nurseries	123	81	66%

There is a clear expectation that every Bristol school should have at minimum one teacher accredited to teach PSHE, and indeed almost every secondary school and most primary schools do – making Bristol a UK leader for PSHE.

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So, we have a network of trained and accredited PSHE teachers in place at the moment, although the coalition government has now taken away funding for the PSHE certificate, without understanding that it was developed as a response to the fact that PSHE was never properly embedded in teacher training qualifications. This is a serious threat to Bristol's successful programme and of course also has to be seen in the context of deep and wide-ranging cuts that are disproportionately hitting women hardest and are in particular, a massive threat to the already patchy provision of vital support services and prevention programmes addressing violence against women and girls. We know that the *financial* costs to society - of domestic abuse alone - reduced from £23bn in 2001 to £16bn in 2008, which is attributed to investment in violence against women programmes, services and interventions. We also know that in the last financial year alone, funding for women's refuges and services tackling domestic violence were savagely and disproportionately cut nationally by 31%.ⁱ So we can expect the incidence of domestic abuse, as well as its cost to society, to rise as a result.

But back to PSHE. By taking a professional approach to the teaching of PSHE, Bristol schools are able to produce clear educational outcomes – measured for example by changes in the number of young people who know where they could report if they were a victim of a sexually violent incident, or the percentage of young people who can say that they know the difference between healthy and unhealthy behaviour in relationships.

Work in Bristol Schools

- “Sex... And Stuff” (Bristol PSHE / SRE) – Healthy Schools
- Extension lessons and activities – LA including Public Health
- External partners
 - Theatre: Myrtle Theatre “
 - Avon & Somerset Police: “Only Yes Means Yes”
 - Platform51: FGM Game
 - Women’s Aid: Expect Respect

Not possible without foundation

Again, it is understood in Bristol that the very necessary teaching and learning about domestic abuse, about FGM, about the difference between sex and porn, cannot come out of a clear blue sky but must fit in to a *programme* of education so that the building blocks have been put in place. That’s why we have a resource called..

Sex... and Stuff

Which lays the groundwork for the basics in sex and relationship education, providing a suite of resources and lesson plans for secondary schools right the way through from Year 7 to Year 11. Of course there are also great materials for early years and the primary curriculum.

Extension Lessons and Activities

And so, with the groundwork in place, schools have got a solid foundation for specific and targeted learning around the prevention of violence and abuse, such as the brilliant work by our health promotion and crime reduction specialists, currently concentrated in East Central Bristol schools, around Domestic Violence and Abuse. These materials include guidance for schools, advice on a whole school approach to violence and abuse, myth-busting about abuse, advice on how to talk to young people, and posters to display in schools letting young people know that they are safe to disclose and will be believed. The team have also been offering specific 2-day training on DVA (Domestic Violence and Abuse) for staff in schools and early years settings which have proved very popular and are being repeated this month. I would hope and trust that after this training and where a whole-school approach is taken, we can expect that more young people will feel safe to disclose to staff in their schools and to be able to access help and support. We shouldn’t forget that parents, too, can disclose to staff in schools and all staff in schools deserve to have the right information to deal with this and the right support to respond appropriately.

External Partners

Schools also work with external partners in the community or statutory sector, and here are just a few examples of current work:

- Myrtle Theatre Company addressed power and control in relationships, touring 6 schools with their amazing “A Letter to That’s Life” production
- Unique Voice Theatre Company addressed early intervention for control in relationships with their [“You+Me4Eva”](#) production, which has just been identified by the Centre for Excellence and Outcomes in Children and Young People’s Services as an example of emerging practice
- Avon and Somerset Police, working with advice from specialists, developed their resource for schools called “Only Yes Means Yes”
- Platform51 worked with young women from a number of schools in Bristol to develop their amazing resource about FGM – the FGM Game.
- Women’s Aid, who are the national Domestic Violence charity based in Bristol, have a fantastic set of [lesson resources for Primary and Secondary age pupils](#) called “Expect Respect”

The success and the reach of this work is made possible by the joined up working in Bristol that takes place through our [Strategic Group](#) for the Prevention of VAAWG, a group that includes our fantastic Public Health and Crime Reduction Teams as well as our indispensable experts in PSHE and SRE from Education, and Police, the Voluntary and Community Sector. We also have a Council Champion for VAAWG, and that is the city’s Strategic Director for Children and Young People’s Services, so a senior officer right at the top tier of management in the Council.

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Building blocks for schools

- Maintain qualified PSHE teachers & PSHE network – PSHE timetabled in curriculum
- Use “Sex... And Stuff” foundation lessons
- Sign-up from ALL schools in all sectors
- Recognise & prioritise VAAWG – join the dots, appoint a lead, look at policies
- Lead staff member overview of curriculum and ongoing training for all

So, there are many things that we're doing right in Bristol. We need to make sure that we continue on this path, and we need to broaden our strategic approach to make sure that we are working with all the schools in our city, regardless of how they are defined now or in the future. It seems clear from the research that what is needed for an effective whole-school approach is for someone in every school to take the lead on VAAWG.

The new [Ofsted framework](#) inspects safety - addressing the concerns of parents who are telling Ofsted that, above all, they want their children to be and feel safe. I hope that schools' understanding both of their statutory safeguarding duties and now the new Ofsted inspection framework will help to promote treating VAAWG as a priority.

There is an important role for parents and governors and the wider community to talk to schools, use the [EVAW SchoolsSafe4Girls](#) pack, keep asking the questions and keep offering your support to schools in this.

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Why not leave it to schools?

- **The building blocks are at risk of disappearing.**
 - PSHE on curriculum
 - Specialist training and certification
 - Networks co-ordinated by LA

So, why not leave the work to the Heads or PSHE leads in schools?

Well, firstly of course while we can't end the culture of VAAWG without our schools' full participation, the responsibility for change sits wider than that. And those incredibly important building blocks that I was talking about, are at risk of disappearing. The need for PSHE to be taught, and well taught, in every school has not gone away and it is critical that Government recognises this by making PSHE a statutory part of every school's curriculum. Properly funded specialist training and certification must be available and prioritised by national and local government as well as by schools themselves.

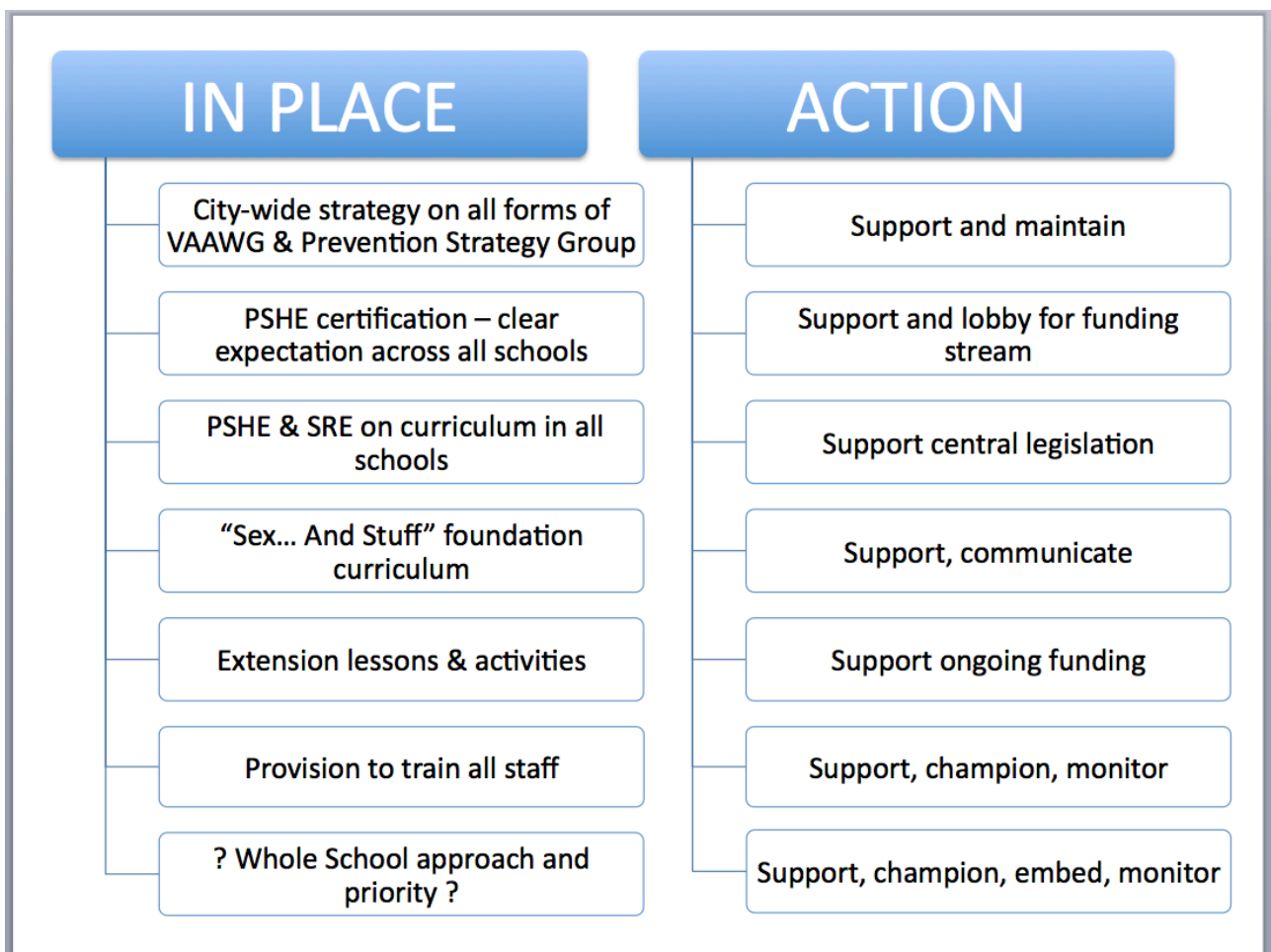
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Political Leadership and Vision – A Safe and Equal Bristol

- Mayor and PCC have vision for the city - & expectations of schools – across all sectors.

So, the arrival of a Mayor for Bristol and a Police and Crime Commissioner for Avon and Somerset are absolutely key to achieving the vision of a Safe and Equal Bristol for us all. As the name implies, the PCC will have responsibility for directing budgets towards preventing VAAWG as well as for providing funding for support services.

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A Mayor and a PCC both have a critical role to play, in speaking out for Bristol as a city that will not tolerate violence and abuse. They also have a great opportunity to work across any political divides, talking with national Government about what needs to happen at national policy level. It's really great to see representatives from all of our local political parties, from a number of our MPs' offices, as well as candidates for Mayor and PCC and their representatives here today. I look forward to your contributions later and really welcome working with you in the future. You can see from the slide here, what is needed more than anything from our local leaders is their solid, committed, visible support of our shared vision to end violence and abuse against women and girls and to give all our children the brighter future they deserve.

ⁱ Walby, S. (2009). *The Cost of Domestic Violence: Up-date 2009*. http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fass/doc_library/sociology/Cost_of_domestic_violence_update.doc%20
And: Towers, J. & Walby, S. (2012). *Measuring the impact of cuts in public expenditure on the provision of services to prevent violence against women and girls*. <http://www.nr-foundation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/Measuring-the-impact-of-cuts-in-public-expenditure-on-the-provision-of-services-to-prevent-violence-against-women-and-girls-Full-report-3.pdf>