

# Briefing Paper

Phase II - Promoting  
Protection and Prevention

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Phase I of this ongoing research programme was about 'Raising the Issue of Domestic Abuse in Schools.' This showed that around 30% of the pupils had experienced Domestic Abuse and a significant minority had had suicidal thoughts as a result.

Phase II is about further exploration of young people's views of Domestic Abuse, both within and beyond their schools. Part of the focus is on what they want in terms of support.

## Methods

Young people in Years one through to six were surveyed during a 21 month period (June 2003 to February 2005). The data was gathered during timetabled classes (Personal and Social Education). Six questions were asked during the survey and they were printed on handouts and fully explained during the session. One of the authors (SP) was present at all times. The option of not participating was offered to all pupils. No individual identification was recorded, but responses were grouped according to gender and year group.

## Results

Responses were gathered from a total of 569 pupils. The genders were equally represented (288 boys; 281 girls). There were more results from the upper school, with 127 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> years; 71 4<sup>th</sup> years; and 371 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> years participating. (No results were available for 3<sup>rd</sup> year pupils.)

The first question asked, 'If your mum was a victim of Domestic Abuse, would you want to be able to tell her where she could get help and what her rights were?' The vast majority (93%) said they would, with only 2% not wanting this. Ninety two percent of the young people thought it would be helpful for pupils to learn about Domestic Abuse, but fewer (88%) thought that the schools should teach it. This may be related to the fact that only 8% felt that all teachers would understand about Domestic Abuse (10% thought some teachers would).

When asked why a young person might not want their friends to know if their mum had experienced Domestic Abuse, the most common reason related to their emotional response (37%) i.e. that they would be embarrassed/ashamed/scared. One quarter thought that the possibility of repercussions would prevent disclosure to their friends, whilst almost one in five thought the young people would be motivated by the need to contain the information, largely within their families. Disclosure would only be to close friends, but there were concerns over trust and finding the right words.