‘They don’t talk about it enough’

Report on the 2014 consultations with Youth Advisors for ‘Our Voices’

Short report
AUTHOR

Claire Cody

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks are due to all the Youth Advisors who took part in the workshops. Our thanks are also due to the partner projects and all those who were involved in organising, facilitating and taking notes during the workshops.

DESIGN

Guildford Street Press

ILLUSTRATION

Julianna Jagielska

PRINT

Pelican Print
Unit 14 Stocklake Park
Farmbrough Close
Aylesbury, Bucks
HP20 1DQ

SUGGESTED CITATION

The ‘Our Voices’ Project
"Our Voices" is a three-year, pan-European initiative funded by the Oak Foundation and the University of Bedfordshire.

The project aims to promote the involvement of young people in efforts to prevent sexual violence against children across Europe.

Project elements include:

WORKING TOGETHER WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

- Developing and supporting a pan-European network of Youth Advisors

- Supporting a number of youth-led activities that will explore the scale, nature, and impact of sexual violence

- Identifying opportunities and events for young people to share their work and views

WORKING TOGETHER WITH ORGANISATIONS THAT WORK WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

- Collaborating with organisations to develop participatory work with children at risk of or affected by sexual violence

- Documenting learning on participatory engagement with young people affected by sexual violence

DEVELOPING RESOURCES

- Developing a database of organisations

- Creating a knowledge bank of resources, models and tools on young people’s participation to prevent sexual violence against children

- Promoting learning and debate through online exchanges and workshops
The consultations with Youth Advisors
In the summer of 2014 as part of the ‘Our Voices’ project, the project team at the University of Bedfordshire, together with country partner projects, organised a number of consultations with Youth Advisors across Albania, Bulgaria and the UK.

THE CONSULTATIONS AIMED TO FIND OUT FROM YOUTH ADVISORS:

- What young people feel the issues are around sexual violence in their communities

- What the barriers and challenges to young people talking about sexual violence and accessing support are

- What young people think could be done to stop sexual violence

- How young people could be more involved in preventing sexual violence
THE YOUNG PEOPLE INVOLVED

Forty-seven young people took part in the consultations. The majority were females (forty-two) however five males were also involved in one of the groups from Bulgaria.

The youngest Youth Advisor involved in the consultations was 11 years old and the oldest was 25. The Youth Advisors had different backgrounds and had a range of different experiences to draw from.
INTRODUCTORY WORKSHOP AND ACTIVITIES FOR YOUTH ADVISORS

A number of icebreakers, games, sessions and activities were designed into the workshop plans to ensure that the Youth Advisors had the opportunity to ask questions, better understand sexual violence and give feedback on the workshops.

The Youth Advisors identified a number of problems in their local areas. Across the different groups similar forms of sexual violence were discussed. These included:

- Unwanted touching
- Child sexual exploitation
- Child rape
- Trafficking
- Sexual harassment

Youth Advisors talked about the different places and spaces where these forms of sexual violence took place. These included:

- In the family home
- In schools and classrooms
- On the street
- On public transport
- At parties
- In the workplace
- On the phone
- Online

The Youth Advisors also talked about who might perpetrate this abuse. This led to discussions about:

- Boyfriends
- Partners
- Friends
- Strangers
- Family members
'I’ve had a car go past me with a group of boys in it and they shouted “get your rat out” at me'

YOUNG PERSON FROM THE UNITED KINGDOM
Word cloud illustrating the different problems that the Youth Advisors identified.

- Drugs
- Rape
- Unwanted touching
- Anal rape
- Paedophiles
- Grooming
- Provocative words
- Need to impress
- Inappropriate photos
- Domestic abuse
- Child sexual exploitation
- Need to impress
- Sexual assault
- Provocative photos
- Grooming
- Forced prostitution
- Lie
- Police
- Lie
WHY IS THIS HAPPENING?

Once the Youth Advisors had identified the issues surrounding sexual violence they felt were happening in their local areas, they were then asked to identify the reasons why they felt this was happening. These were some of the reasons they gave:

- People ignore sexual violence
- Lack of information
- Parents not protecting their children, or bad examples given by adults
- Being young and feeling pressured and scared
- The impact of pornography
- Wider social issues such as drug and alcohol abuse or poverty
- Perpetrators going unpunished
- No systems of safety
- The police not doing enough to stop sexual violence
‘People ignoring it don’t want to believe someone they know is doing it’

YOUNG PERSON FROM THE UNITED KINGDOM

‘Girls don’t consider it as abuse, what happened to them’

YOUNG PERSON FROM ALBANIA

‘Porn looks down on girls, then boys think that’s how it is’

YOUNG PERSON FROM THE UNITED KINGDOM
WHAT ARE THE BARRIERS AND CHALLENGES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE TALKING ABOUT SEXUAL VIOLENCE, ACCESSING SUPPORT AND REPORTING?

Youth Advisors identified a number of barriers and challenges that they felt prevented young people from knowing about and understanding sexual violence.

- Lack of information and education in schools and society
- Failure to talk about sex
- Shame and embarrassment
- Not being believed or supported
- Fear and being scared
- Not asking for help and not understanding the situation
- Not trusting enough to report and ‘go public’
- Not knowing where to go for help
- Wanting to forget
- Not understanding the systems
- Lack of confidence in the police system and institutions
nobody will listen
embarrassed
assaulted
alone
scared
threatened
humiliated
afraid
verbal
violent
abused
reputation
victim
incest
lack of trust
who am i
without
guilty
victim of domestic violence
‘The shame you cannot talk about this issue’

YOUNG PERSON FROM ALBANIA

‘You might be called a liar and attention seeker’

YOUNG PERSON FROM THE UNITED KINGDOM

‘Young people don’t know who to talk to so that they can be informed’

YOUNG PERSON FROM ALBANIA
HOW CAN WE OVERCOME THE BARRIERS AND CHALLENGES THAT PREVENT YOUNG PEOPLE FROM TALKING ABOUT AND KNOWING ABOUT AND GETTING HELP ON THIS ISSUE?

Youth Advisors came up with a number of suggestions to address some of the barriers and challenges:

- Better education in schools
- Education outside of the classroom
- Education and support for parents
- To talk about it more
- More and better services
- More awareness about sexual violence support services
- For professionals (police, judiciary) to develop skills and gain young people’s confidence
- Tackle wider social problems
- Change attitudes and promote empathy
'People should talk about the issue'

YOUNG PERSON FROM BULGARIA

'Educate parents – after school sessions'

YOUNG PERSON FROM THE UNITED KINGDOM

'To be informed about non-governmental organisations that offer help'

YOUNG PERSON FROM ALBANIA
'The police officers should gain people’s confidence, they should participate in trainings for learning how to deal with a victim of sexual abuse'
HOW YOUTH ADVISORS THINK YOUNG PEOPLE COULD BE MORE INVOLVED IN PREVENTING SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Youth Advisors thought they or other young people could get involved in sexual violence prevention work by:

■ Getting involved in campaigns, events and distributing resources
■ Talking about sexual violence to other young people and being ‘ambassadors’
■ Working as a volunteer with services and supporting others

WHY SHOULD YOUNG PEOPLE BE INVOLVED?

Youth Advisors came up with a number of reasons as to why they felt young people should be involved in sexual violence prevention efforts. They said that:

■ Young people talk the same language
■ Young people accept things
■ Young people know more about what’s happening

HOW CAN WE HELP MORE YOUNG PEOPLE TO GET INVOLVED - WHAT’S IMPORTANT?

Youth Advisors felt that it was important for organisations wanting to engage young people in sexual violence prevention efforts to:

■ Show them examples of how other young people had been involved in efforts
■ Offer training opportunities
■ Provide incentives
■ Think about the language that is used
■ Make it fun
■ Make it feel safe and comfortable for young people to be involved
‘If young people talk about their experiences, it’s easier for other people to’

YOUNG PERSON FROM THE UNITED KINGDOM

‘Children feel more comfortable when sharing things with peers’

YOUNG PERSON FROM BULGARIA
‘We must be trained in specific techniques and games in order to explain sexual violence’

YOUNG PERSON FROM ALBANIA

‘Change words, sexual violence is harsh, difficult to say’

YOUNG PERSON FROM THE UNITED KINGDOM
WHAT WOULD PREVENT YOUNG PEOPLE GETTING INVOLVED IN ACTIONS?

Youth Advisors also came up with lots of things that would stop them from getting involved which included if:

- Too much time was involved
- It meant re-living experiences and feeling re-traumatised
- There were not enough resources or incentives
- It caused stigma and embarrassment for young people
- They were scared about the perpetrators finding out
- The work was boring and solitary
- It wasn't organised and official
- Young people were not ready to be involved or not interested
- They did not have the right information or had had a bad experience

ARE THERE ANY KEY VALUES OR PRINCIPLES THAT SHOULD GUIDE HOW WE INVOLVE YOUNG PEOPLE IN PREVENTION WORK?

Youth Advisors came up with a number of what they felt were key principles that were important when working with young people.

- To listen
- To take time and involve young people in decision-making
- To give encouragement and promote confidence
- To make sure involvement is meaningful
- To be non-judgemental
- To be careful
- To give clear information
- To work with others
- To respect
- To not be patronising or forceful
- To understand and be patient
- To be inclusive
'If experiences (of sexual violence) are recent, fresh, raw'

- Young Person from the United Kingdom

'Wouldn’t want to be part of it if wasn’t official and you didn’t look official'

- Young Person from the United Kingdom

'Fear of threats from the abuser'

- Young Person from Albania
Some of the key messages from Youth Advisors
After taking part in the workshops, the Youth Advisors had a number of key messages for different groups. Here are a few of them....

**FOR YOUNG PEOPLE**

Be wise, wise up

Get informed about sexual violence! It affects 1 in 10 children worldwide

Together against sexual violence – youths for youths!

It was not your fault!

Tell someone

It’s never the victim’s fault, don’t feel guilty

Look, just because I was once a victim, doesn’t mean I’m still a victim

**FOR PARENTS AND CARERS**

Talk and inform your children about sexual abuse. It’s not a taboo.

**FOR SCHOOLS**

Invite services in to talk to the school

Have regular meetings with staff

**FOR THE POLICE**

Just because I didn’t say the word ‘NO’ does not mean that I gave consent

**FOR FUNDERS**

Help us to use our experiences to help other people and share our knowledge with other countries
‘They don’t talk about it enough’
Report on the 2014 consultations
with Youth Advisors for ‘Our Voices’

Short report

FIND OUT MORE

For more information and to access the full report visit:
www.beds.ac.uk/research-ref/iass/centres/ourvoices

Claire Cody
claire.cody@beds.ac.uk

CONTRIBUTORS AND PARTNER PROJECTS