



choices

A creative and empowering project for young men at risk of becoming perpetrators of domestic abuse that focuses on taking responsibility for behaviour and making positive choices. .

Why is Choices needed in schools?

Choices was developed because domestic abuse is a widespread problem with a huge impact on children and young people in Nottingham and the UK.

- 16-19 year old young women are more at risk of domestic abuse than other age groups (Director of Public Prosecutions, 2011)
- 1 in 4 teenage girls have experienced physical violence from their partner (NSPCC, 2009)
- 1 in 8 women aged 17-21 years say a partner frightened or threatened them (Girlguiding, 2015)
- ChildLine gets 3000 contacts a year from young people about domestic abuse (NSPCC, 2014)

This violence puts young people in danger, and can affect their attendance and performance at school. Prevention work to stop domestic abuse needs to start early. It is hugely important to encourage all young people to aspire to have healthy relationships in the future and acknowledge that they deserve healthy relationships.

It is particularly important to start working with boys and young men who are demonstrating potentially abusive attitudes and behaviours, to stop these from hardening and introduce them to positive and healthy ideas about relationships.

What are the aims of Choices?

Choices aims to empower boys and young men to change their own lives and avoid or stop using abusive behaviours, by helping them to:

- recognise their own behaviour and how it impacts on others
- manage their feelings and emotions
- make positive relationship choices

Choices has been designed in line with the British Government's Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) strategy, which aims to use prevention work to "educate, inform and challenge young people about healthy relationships, abuse and consent, and engage men and boys in challenging VAWG."

What does Choices involve?

The project is designed for for small groups of young men in Year 10 identified by schools and by youth offending teams as using or at risk of using abusive behaviours, or displaying negative attitudes about women and girls. The project takes place during school time, requiring attendees to be released from their school timetable. Alternatively, Choices can be run as an after-school project that the school actively supports and encourages young men to attend.

The first 7 sessions will each focus on a different topic: perceptions of self and self-esteem; choices – tools and techniques to consider your actions and their consequences; dealing with feelings and anger; healthy relationships - what young men and women deserve from a relationship; the importance of personal space, consent and understanding sexual bullying; what it is to 'be a man' and expectations of manhood; men who have achieved and positive goal-setting.

All these sessions involve a range of learning techniques to maximise the young men's engagement, knowledge retention and enjoyment. They include a range of collaborative, interactive exercises, self-reflection, fun and challenging group activities, and role plays. However, Equation's delivery is flexible, allowing the structure and pace to be altered to suit the young men's needs.

In session 8, the project culminates in the development and presentation of a piece of creative work, the creative format as decided by the young men. This creative work consolidates their learning, facilitates sharing of their learning with others and helps to build their pride and self-esteem.

[Read an example Choices session plan](#)

What are the benefits of Choices?

- Young men are able to identify the choices they have, including in relationships, and are empowered to make positive choices
- Participants increase their self-worth and aspirations for their future
- Young men learn where to go for help and support with unhealthy relationships
- Young men engage in careful self-reflection about emotions, choices and plans
- Participants improve their skills in managing friendships and family relationships

Long-term studies also suggest that interventions focussing on social and emotional well-being can result in a positive shift in attainment levels (Durlak *et al.*, 2011)

Evaluation: measuring success

All work with young people involves a one-to-one session at the beginning and end of the project. This enables individual signposting to support and completion of an evaluation tool.

Following project delivery, each school will receive a detailed impact report that highlights evaluated changes in knowledge and attitudes amongst the project participants, as well as what they thought of the project.

In 2015-16, overall the young men felt that the project had...

- ...helped them to make positive changes to their life, by a score of 8/10
- ...changed the way they thought about being a man, by a score of 8/10
- ...helped them to feel good about themselves, by a score of 8/10
- ...helped them to sort out differences in a way that is fair, by a score of 8/10
- ...helped to improve their friendships, by a score of 8/10
- ...helped to improve a family relationship, by a score of 8/10
- ...made them think about how they behave in their relationships, by a score of 8/10
- ...helped them to understand their rights and regarding their bodies, by a score of 8/10
- ...helped them to know where to go for help and support with unhealthy relationships, by a score of 8/10

All young men overall gave The Choices Project an average score of **9/10**

Comments from young men

What will you remember most from the project?

How to make the right choices
What makes a healthy relationship
Getting Involved and acting
Personal space and how to behave
Everyone is equal
Creative work
Friendships
Made me think about how to treat others
How to respect people around you
How to treat people
Gender Equality
Men and Women's rights

Funding

Costs for Choices projects will vary according to the delivery needs. Please [get in touch](#) with our Children and Young People team to discuss your requirements and get a quote.