

Preventing domestic abuse for children and young people (PEACH): a mixed knowledge scoping review

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Plain English summary

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This study used a survey, literature reviews and consultation with young people and experts to examine ways of preventing domestic abuse for children and young people. Preventative interventions include programmes delivered in school and media campaigns.

Although a wide range of preventative initiatives are delivered in the UK, provision is patchy and lacks sustainability. This reflects an absence of policy direction and insecure funding, with health service funding being especially low.

Evidence for interventions changing knowledge and attitudes is stronger than that for behavioural change. UK strategy should focus on developing home-grown interventions with features that young people find engaging such as drama/narrative. Such interventions should be closely linked to services to respond to disclosures of abuse.

While most interventions are delivered in secondary schools, they are being increasingly targeted at younger children. This research highlighted the importance of a school's 'readiness' to introduce preventative interventions and 'whole-system' approaches. Authenticity was important and was improved by involving young people at all stages.

Longer interventions delivered by trained staff appear more effective. Teachers are well placed to embed interventions in schools but they require training and support from those with specialist domestic abuse knowledge.

The impact of programmes may vary for different groups. Increasingly, boys are the key target group for change. There is a need for interventions designed for disabled children, for those from black, Asian, minority ethnic and refugee groups and for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender young people.

Future UK research should include the rigorous testing of home-grown programmes, and the evaluation of interventions for younger children and of media campaigns.

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