



VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

YOUTH VOICE WORKSHOP



EMILY SPURRELL
MERSEYSIDE POLICE
& CRIME COMMISSIONER



ABOUT US



The RAISE Team at Merseyside Youth Association provide mental health training and violence prevention education to Secondary Schools in Merseyside. The team's Mentors in Violence Prevention Programme (MVP) equips young people with the skills and confidence to be active bystanders against gender-based violence.

Emily is in her second term as Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) for Merseyside.

As PCC, Emily has prioritised preventing crime, tackling Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG), improving police scrutiny and transparency, and supporting victims of crime.

In November 2022, Emily launched the 'Working in partnership to tackle Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) Delivery Plan' which sets out a clear ambition to protect women and girls who live, work and visit Merseyside, prevent violence, pursue offenders and ensure tackling VAWG is prioritised and treated with urgency.



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The Merseyside Violence Reduction Partnership (MVRP) is a team of subject leads and experts working together, with Merseyside's communities, to address the underlying causes of violence and prevent it. Adopting a public health approach, they are focused on intervening in a positive way to help young people and families from before birth to young adulthood.



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VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS (VAWG) YOUTH WORKSHOP

Thursday 20th November & Thursday 27th November

ABOUT THE PROJECT

Delivered by the MYA RAISE Team, funded by The Merseyside Police and Crime Commissioners Office and Merseyside Violence Reduction Partnership, two youth voice workshops were held during the 16 Days of Activism Campaign to end violence against women and girls (VAWG).

The sessions brought together young people, youth workers and professionals within the field of VAWG and violence prevention to explore young people's perception and understanding of VAWG and ensure their voice is embedded into upcoming strategies - something which has not been done previously.

Young people volunteered to take part and were given the space to have their voices heard by an audience with the end outcome of influencing upcoming VAWG strategies - following the Lundy Model of Participation.

Outcomes:

- To increase young people's understanding of VAWG including definition, forms and prevalence.
- To identify and discuss factors that contribute to VAWG in your communities to inform strategies.
- To co-produce a youth informed VAWG statement to be included in regional VAWG strategies.
- To identify and commit to an active bystander role.

YOUNG PEOPLE

Name:	Age
Matthew Morris	24
Grace Goodman	21
Claire Johnson	19
Vinny Radcliffe	19
Eylul Kura	17
Andreaa Boldisor	15

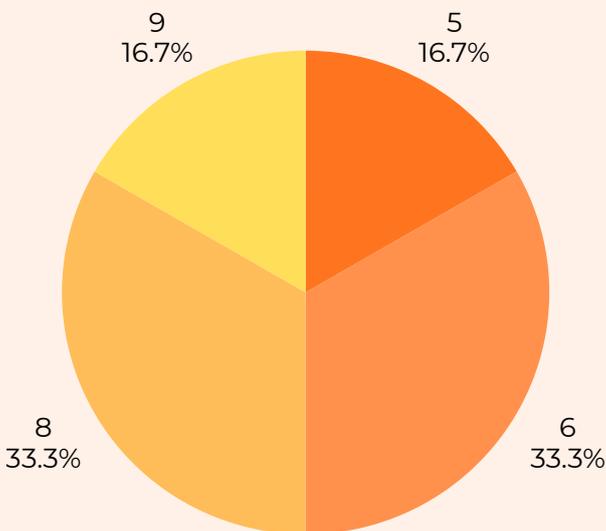
Pre and Post Measures



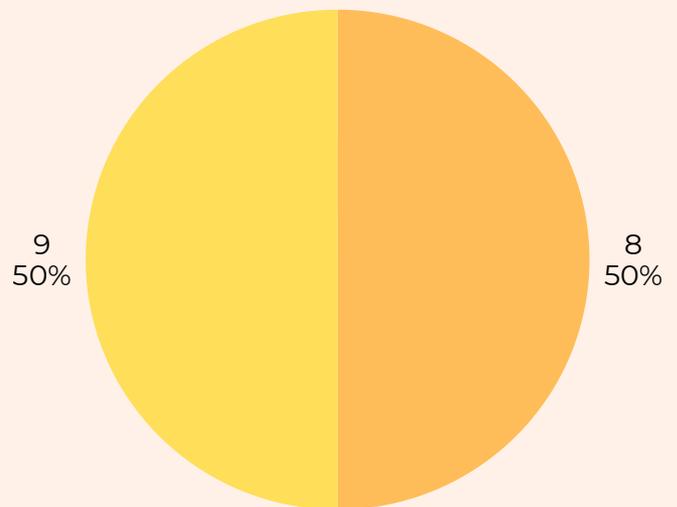
Surveys were completed prior to the 1st session, and again at the end of the 2nd session to measure distanced travelled against the outcomes.

I feel I have a voice around children & young people's mental health

Pre



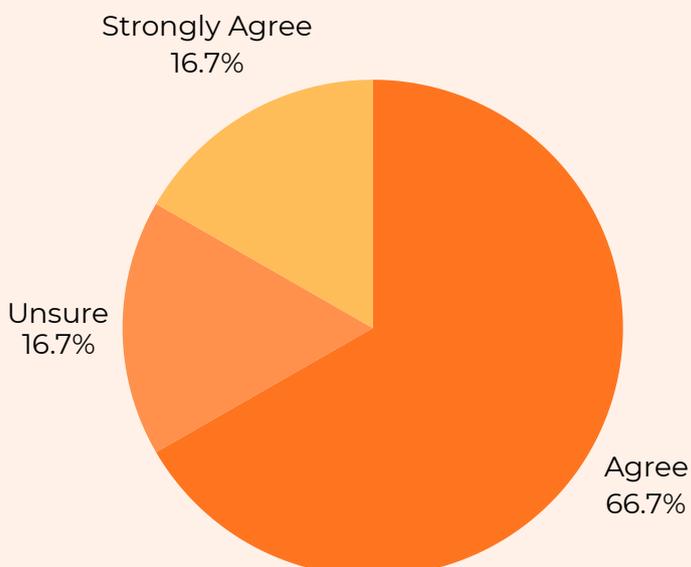
Post



scale of 1-10, 1 = you don't agree, 10 = you really agree

I understand what VAWG is and what it means

Pre



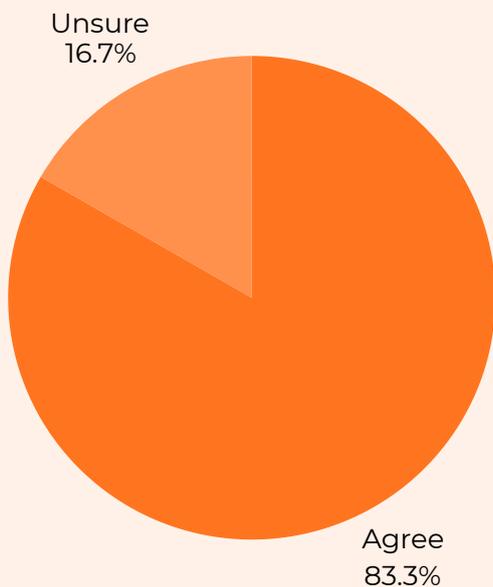
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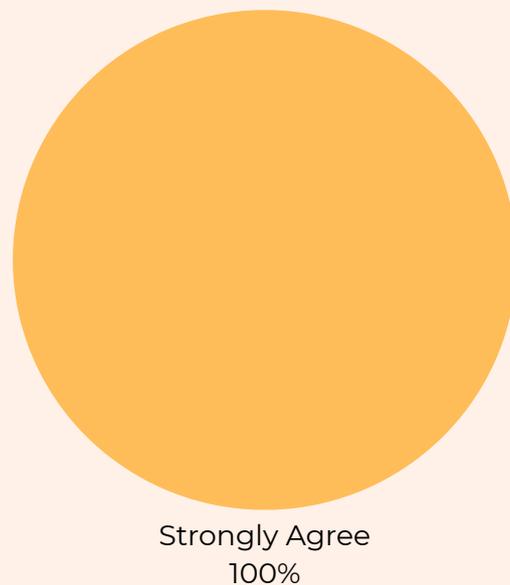


I know about the different types/forms of VAWG

Pre

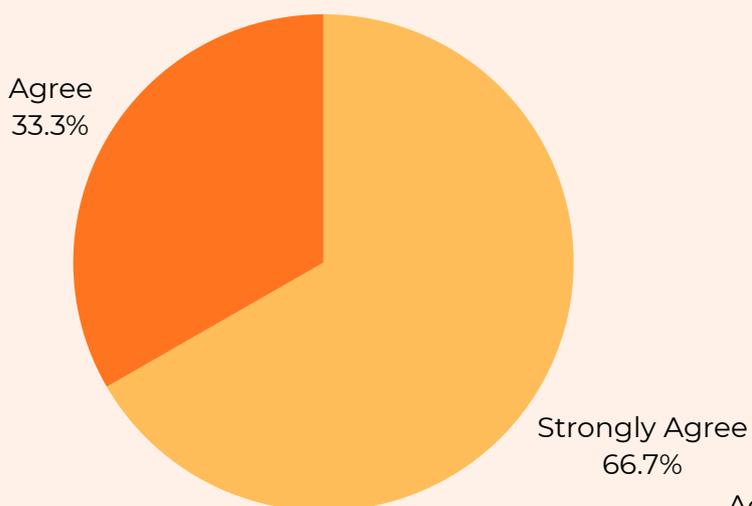


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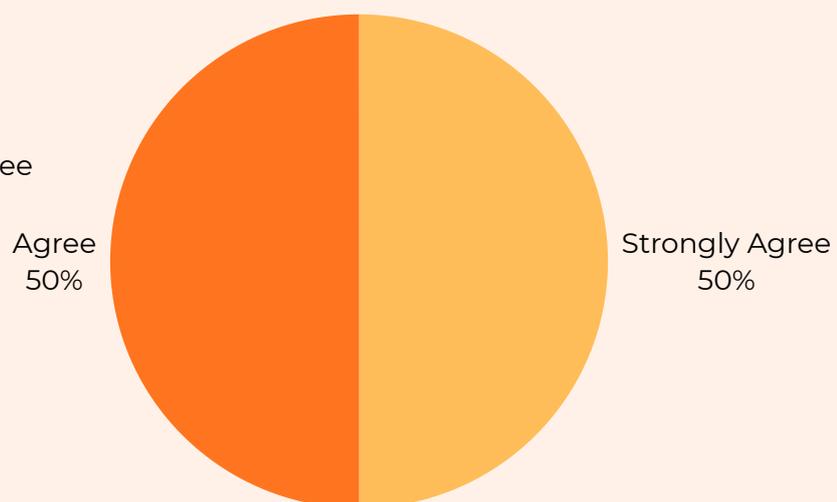


I know what kind of things can lead to VAWG happening

Pre



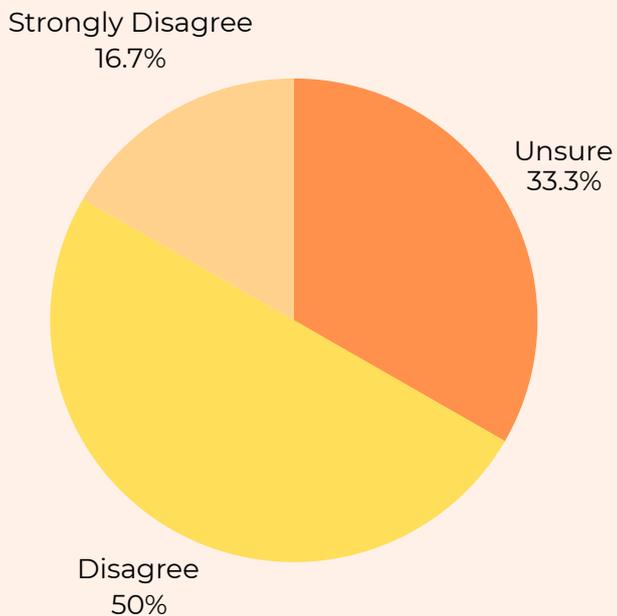
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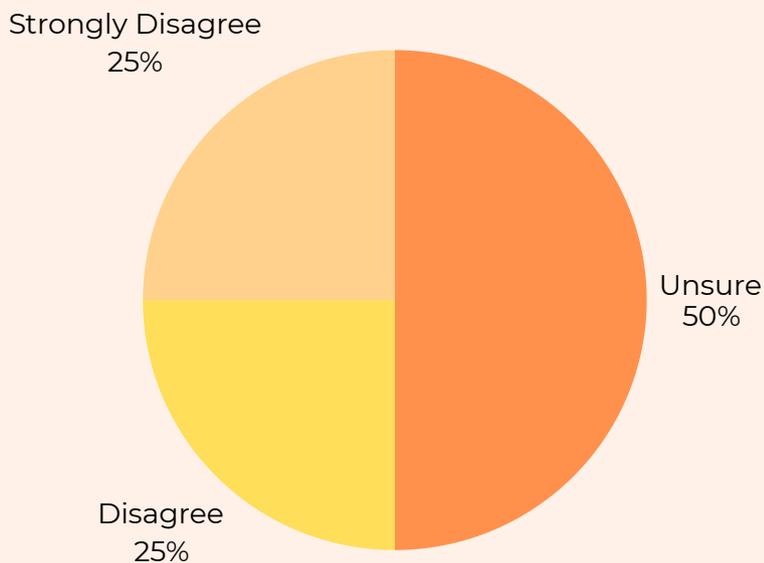


I think people take VAWG seriously

Pre

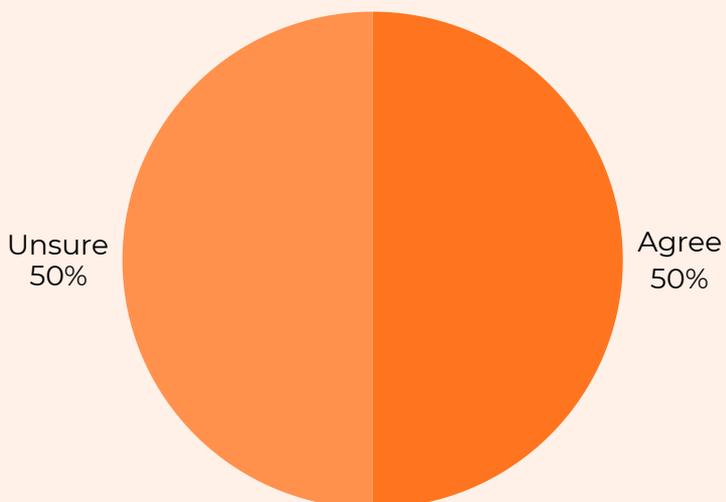


Post



I know what I can do to be an active bystander against VAWG

Pre



Post

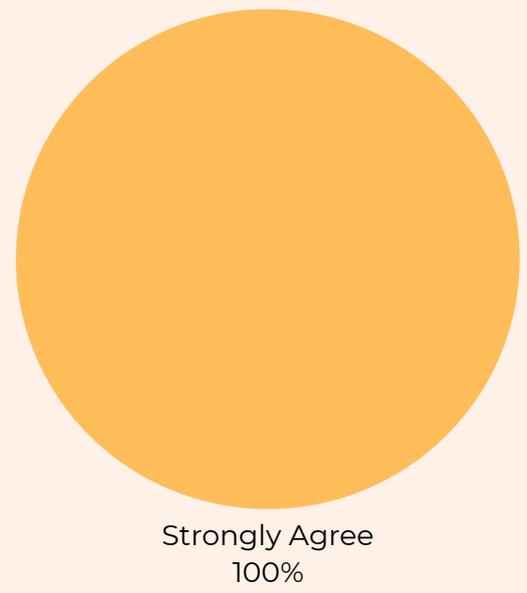
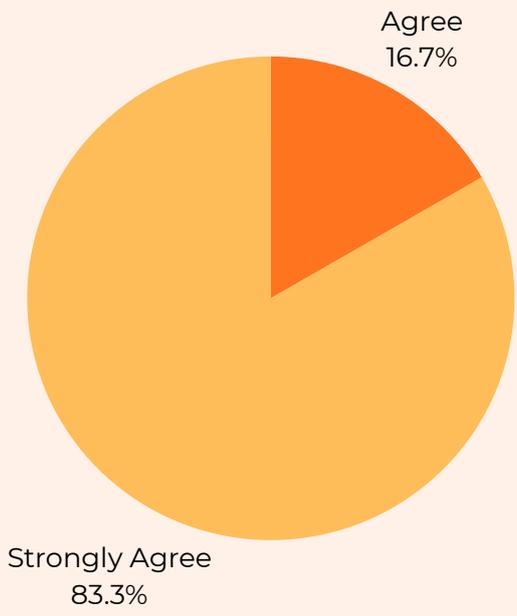




It is important for young people to have a space to talk about topics such as VAWG

Pre

Post



Additional feedback:

“Just wanted to let you know the VAWG sessions were amazing Rhiann!! I really enjoyed them and learnt a good fair few things from the others that I wouldn't have ever thought about!! It's been so lovely seeing everyone again and it was amazing to speak to the crime commissioner and such ^-^.”



ACTIVITIES

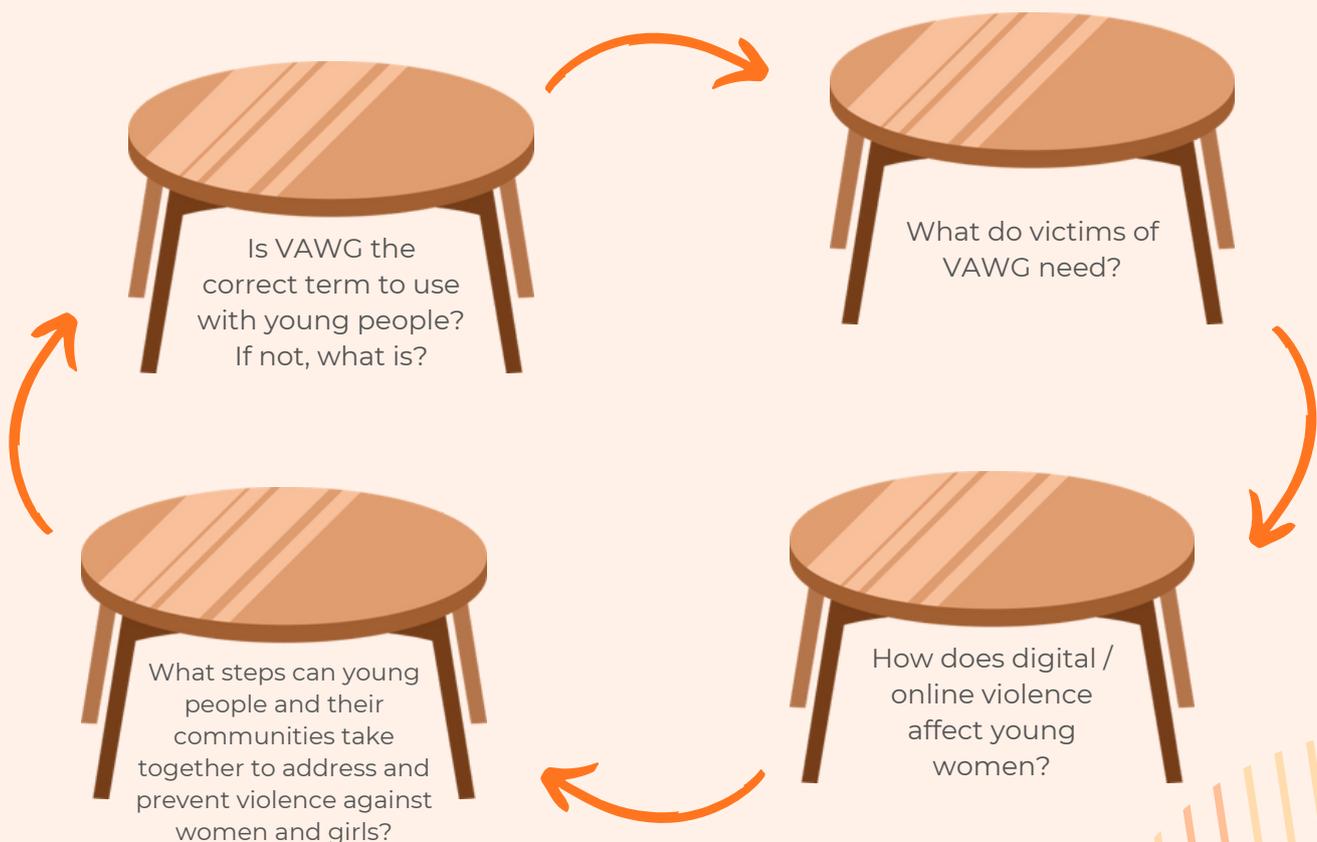
What does VAWG mean to you?

To gauge what the young people already knew about VAWG, we created an interactive wordcloud to showcase key words, phrases and statements.



Carousel

To continue exploring young people's understanding of VAWG, we moved around four tables - each with a different question. These were the outcomes:



CAROUSEL ACTIVITY

Is VAWG the correct term to use with young people? If not, what is?

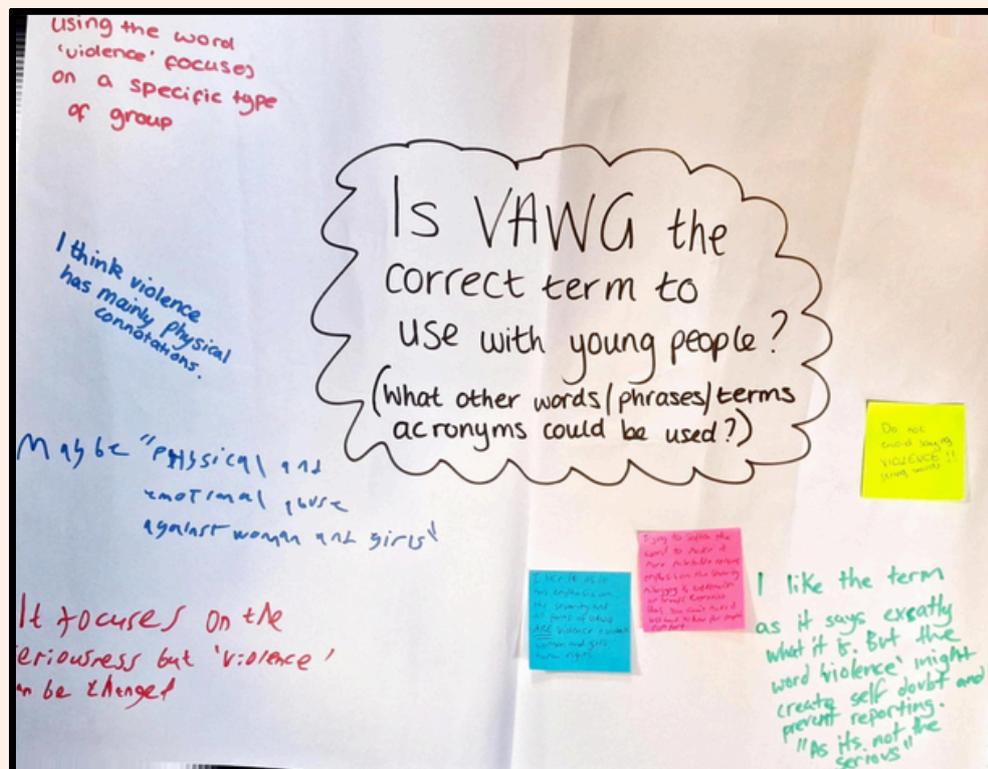
Key points:

'Violence' has a physical connotation.

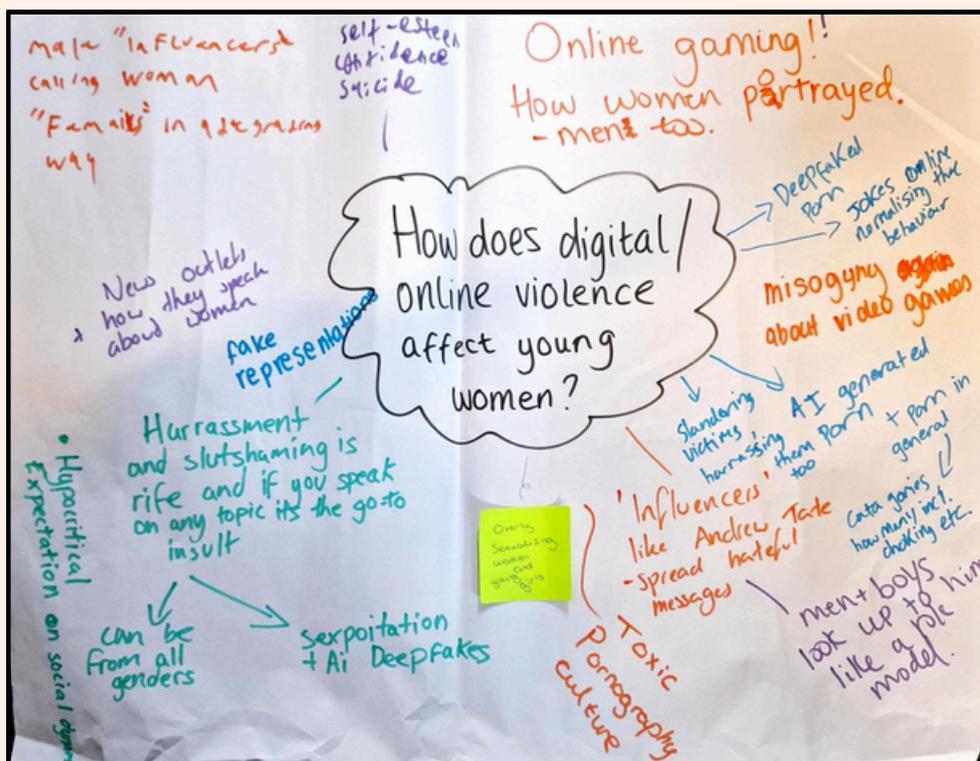
'Violence' might create self-doubt and prevent reporting "as it's not that serious".

Emphasises the severity and all forms of VAWG are violence and violate women and girls rights.

Trying to soften the word 'violence' may make it more palatable - removes emphasis on the severity.



How does digital / online violence affect young women?



Key points:

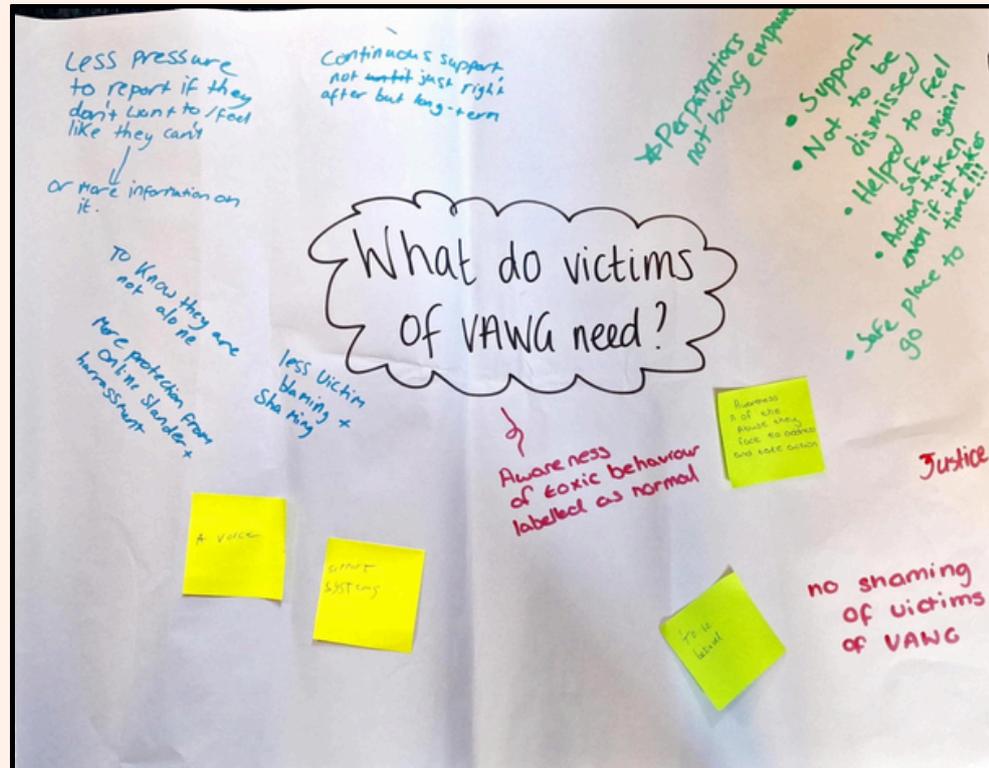
- Portrayal of women in gaming.
- Influencers spreading hateful messages.
- Sexual exploitation and AI deepfakes.
- Porn and AI generated porn.
- Jokes / normalising behaviour.
- Harassment and slutshaming.

CAROUSEL ACTIVITY

What do victims of VAWG need?

Key points:

- More information on how to report it along with less pressure to report if they don't want to.
- Long-term support.
- Perpetrators not being empowered by authorities.
- Safe places to go.
- Awareness of behaviours that may be labelled as 'normal'.
- A voice.
- To be believed.
- Action to be taken, even if it takes a long time.



What steps can young people & their communities take to address and prevent VAWG?



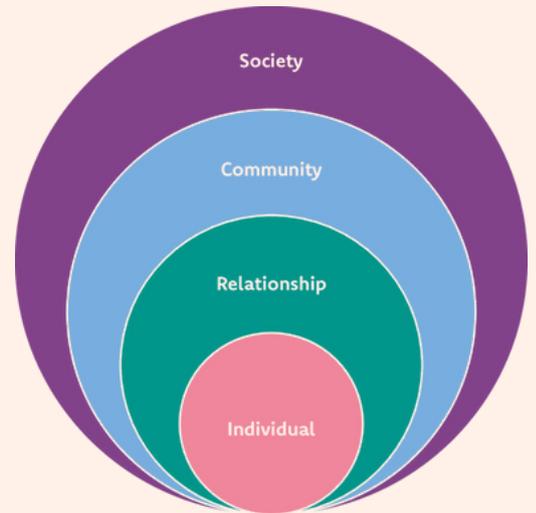
Key points:

- Support groups for victims.
- Teach people how to call it out safely.
- Monitor what young people are consuming online.
- Education for all genders.
- Create safe spaces to share.
- Tackle normalising abuse from a young age i.e. "he's pulling your hair because he likes you".
- Teach women and girls about the warning signs.
- Take action and speak out if something is not right.

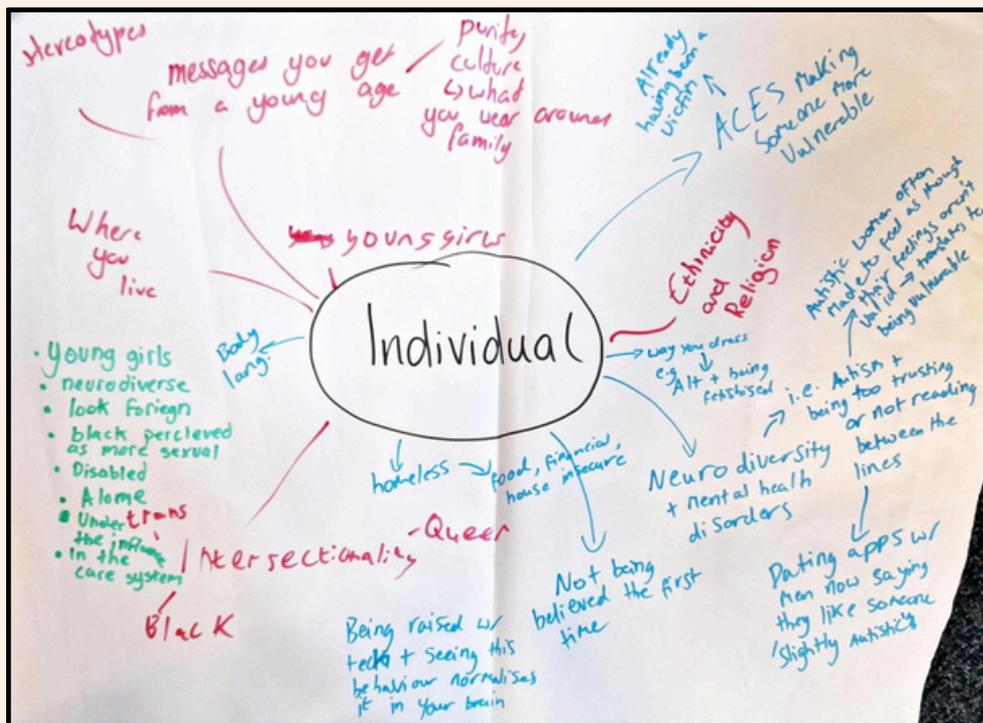
ECOLOGICAL MODEL

This activity aimed to explore young people's experiences and/or understanding of how VAWG can occur throughout each level of the ecological model.

Using a carousel - young people rotated around each table to write down their thoughts and ideas for each stage.



Individual



For the individual level, we asked the young people to discuss what factors a person may have that might mean they may be more likely to experience violence.

Key points:

- Neurodiversity.
- Intersectionality of different factors.
- Where you live.
- Ethnicity, Religion and Culture.
- Already been a victim of violence/abuse.

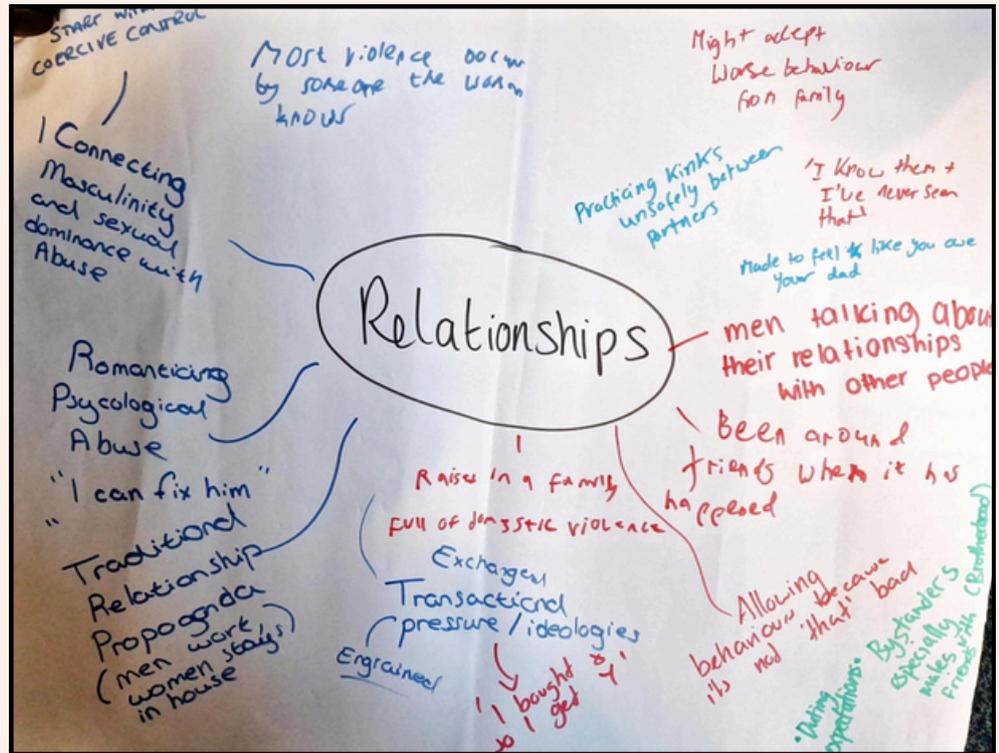
Something that stood out in this conversation with the group was the element of neurodiversity and how autistic women are often made to feel that their feelings aren't valid which translates into them being more vulnerable. It was also discussed that those with Autism struggle with social cues and therefore may be too trusting and not able to read between the lines.

ECOLOGICAL MODEL

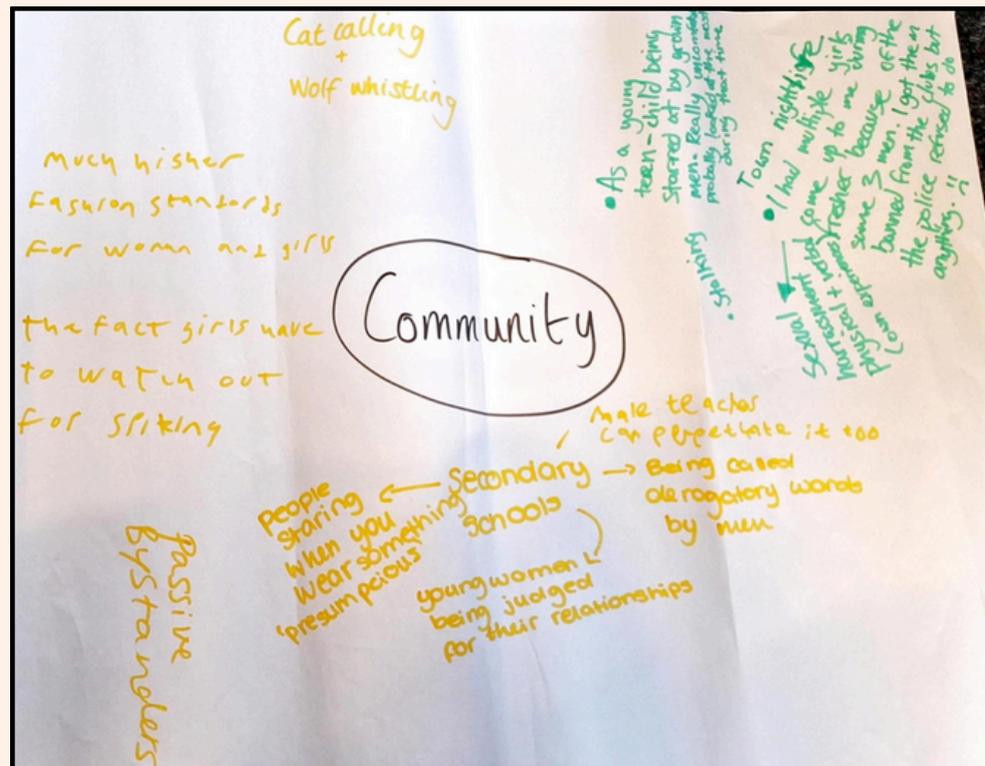
Relationships

Key points:

- Connecting masculinity and sexual dominance with abuse.
- Traditional relationship propaganda.
- Romanticising psychological abuse - "I can fix him".
- Violence against women is usually by someone they know.
- Being raised in a family where domestic violence is present.
- Practicing sexual kinks unsafely without knowledge.
- Allowing behaviours because it's "not that bad".
- Men talking about their relationships with others.



Community



Key points:

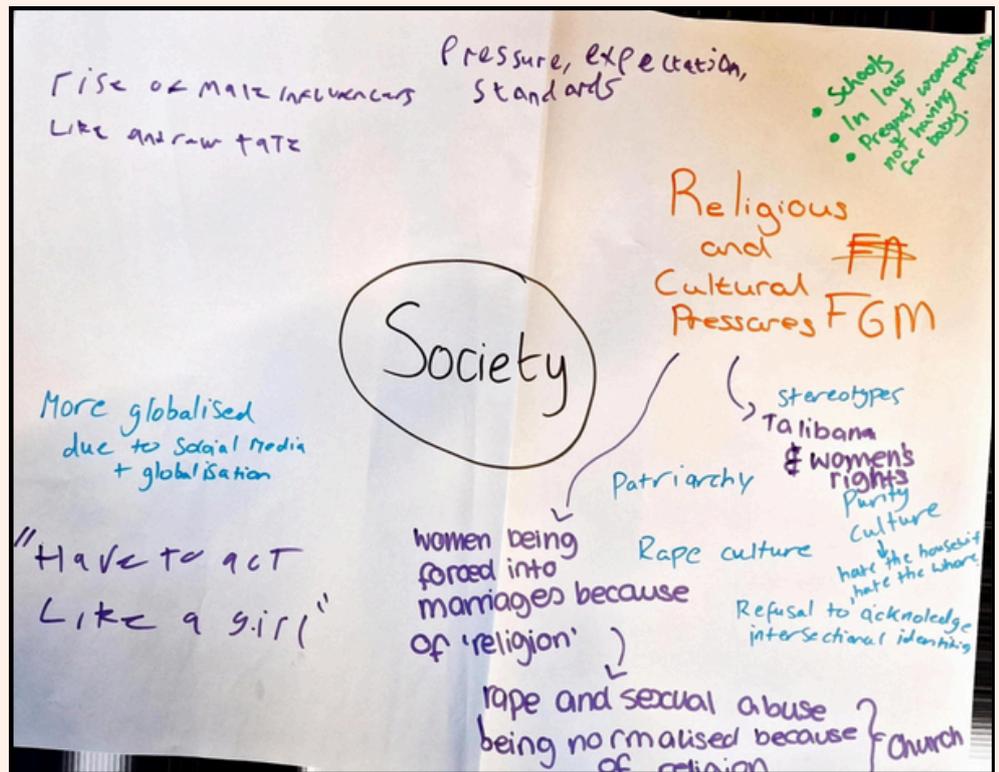
- Higher fashion standards.
- Girls needing to watch out for spiking.
- People staring - older men.
- Judgement for relationships.
- Nightlife - police not helping.
- Sexual harassment, stalking, cat-calling and wolf-whistling.

ECOLOGICAL MODEL

Society

Key points:

- Rise of male influencers.
- Pressures, expectations and standards.
- Issue is globalised due to social media.
- Religious and cultural pressures.
- FGM (female genital mutilation).
- Women's rights in different cultures - Taliban.
- Women being forced into marriages because of 'religion'.



- Rape and sexual abuse being normalised because of religion, also the church.
- Purity culture - hate the housewife, but hate the whore.
- Rape culture.
- Patriarchy.
- Men talking about their relationships with others.

“ Act like a girl ”



FEEDBACK AND DISCUSSION

During the 2nd workshop, Police and Crime Commissioner Emily Spurrell, and Superintendent Georgina Garvey, Director of the Merseyside Violence Reduction Partnership joined us to hear the voices of our young people.

The young people started by feeding back the outcomes of the activities from Day 1 and were involved in discussions that were posed to them by Emily and Georgina.

Is there ever a safe place for pornography?

Young Peoples response:

It is a complicated picture. The titles and categories within porn are oversexualising and encouraging violence of both young girls and women more generally. Schools and those who engage with young people need to feel more comfortable to engage in this topic without shame or fear and it does make a difference taking a gendered approach to delivery. I.e male teachers delivering sex education to female students and vice versa, creates discomfort and undermines the message.

“EDUCATION SHOULD MOVE BEYOND CONSENT AND FOCUS ON ACTIVE BYSTANDING AND INTERVENTION, AS AN ADVOCATE BOTH FOR THEMSELVES AND OTHERS IN BOUNDARIES AND RESPECT”

Social media being banned in Australia, is this a good thing?

Young Peoples response:

There were mixed views on whether this does enough to solve the issue around misogyny and negative beliefs, and access to explicit or inappropriate images/content, but a recognition that a blanket ban would prevent the hierarchy amongst children and remove the notion of ‘missing out’.



Q & A

During the 2nd workshop, the young people were also given the opportunity to ask some key questions, created by themselves, to both PCC Emily Spurrell and Director of the MVRP, Georgina Garvey.

Q: What training is being given to police to prevent and tackle biases in their response to tackling VAWG and to not empower/enable perpetrators?

A: Emily and Georgina discussed how Merseyside Police receive training on Domestic Abuse Matters, vulnerability, trauma-informed practice and are now actively improving their response to stalking through the 100 Strong Campaign with the Suzy Lamplugh Trust.

Q: Is there any more we can do in schools to educate young people on VAWG?

A: Emily and Georgina state that education is key but very challenging to get a consistent approach to education inputs, and it is difficult to secure education representation at a strategic and operational partnership level.

It was highlighted that there are services already actively engaging with youth education through the Ariel Trust 'Send me a Selfie' programme delivering on consent, mutual respect and boundaries, sharing of sexual images and misogyny as well as MYA's Mentors in Violence Prevention programme, highlighted as a key gender-based violence project.

The MVRP stated that they understand how education programmes should get upstream of education and prevention.

This section is based on notes taken during the session and is intended to be a summary, not a verbatim transcript



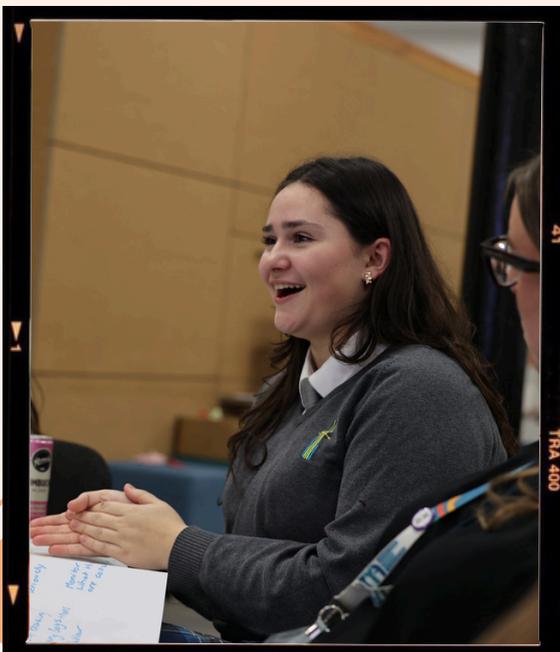
Q & A

Q: How can you ensure that the criminal justice system and reporting mechanisms are trauma informed and respond to vulnerable victims' needs?

A: Emily and Georgina highlighted that trauma informed training is already delivered to police officers and staff, and there is a lot of work from the MVRP to build a more trauma-informed custody setting particularly for young people. It was discussed that the fundamental challenge is that the Criminal Justice System has not been designed to be victim or women centred – it was designed by men and with men in mind.

Q: How can we better educate today's youth on the police reporting system and make it less intimidating for them to report to police?

A: Emily and Georgina recognised that there is much more to be done in building trust and confidence for victims and survivors but there are multiple ways for victims to report via Merseyside Police including digital means of reporting. In addition Crimestoppers is a way for victims to report anonymously and are encouraging young people specifically to use the reporting mechanism.



This section is based on notes taken during the session and is intended to be a summary, not a verbatim transcript

Q & A



Q: Should there be more education for young people on reporting, specifically the process following making a report and considering intersectionality including neurodivergence?

A: Emily and Georgina acknowledged that the process of reporting and engaging with criminal justice agencies should not be more traumatic than the incident itself, and so that feedback given by a young person was very concerning. It was highlighted that there is a balance to strike for policing between the expectations around managing the expectations of what it means to report, the difficulty of the process and the outcomes vs dissuading victims from reporting in the first place.

Q: Do you personally believe that your services are doing enough to tackle VAWG - and if not why not?

A: Emily and Georgina recognised that the reality is some organisations are not doing enough, and VAWG needs to be treated as the national emergency it is and with the severity it deserves.

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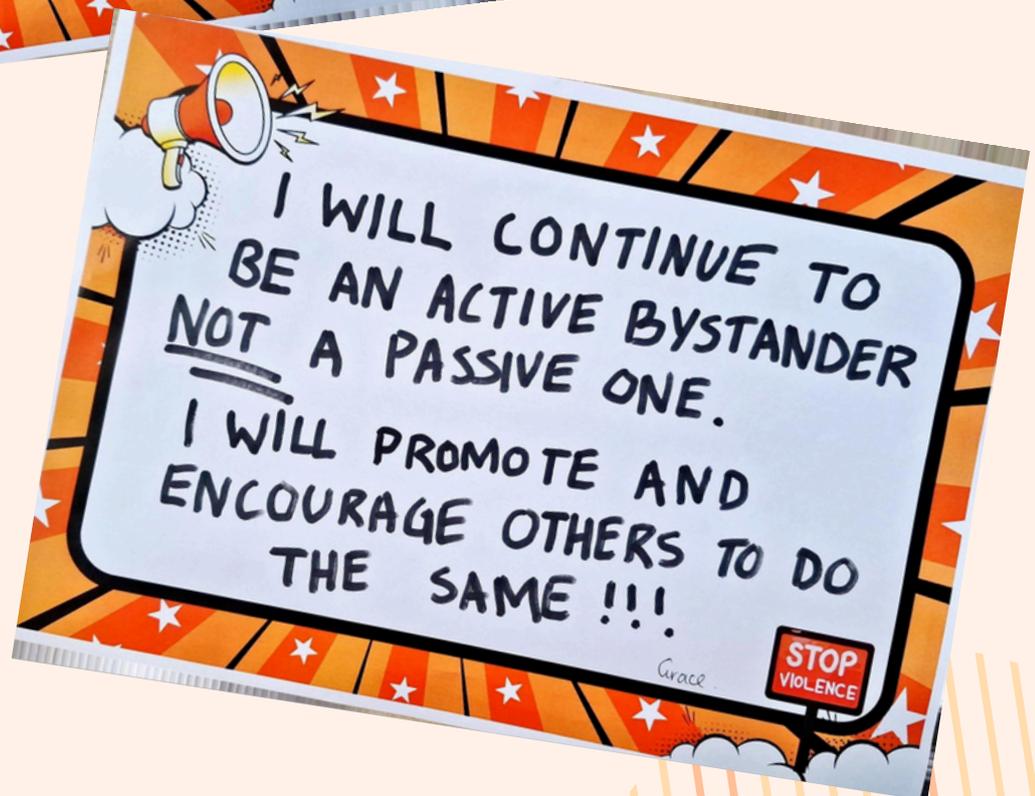
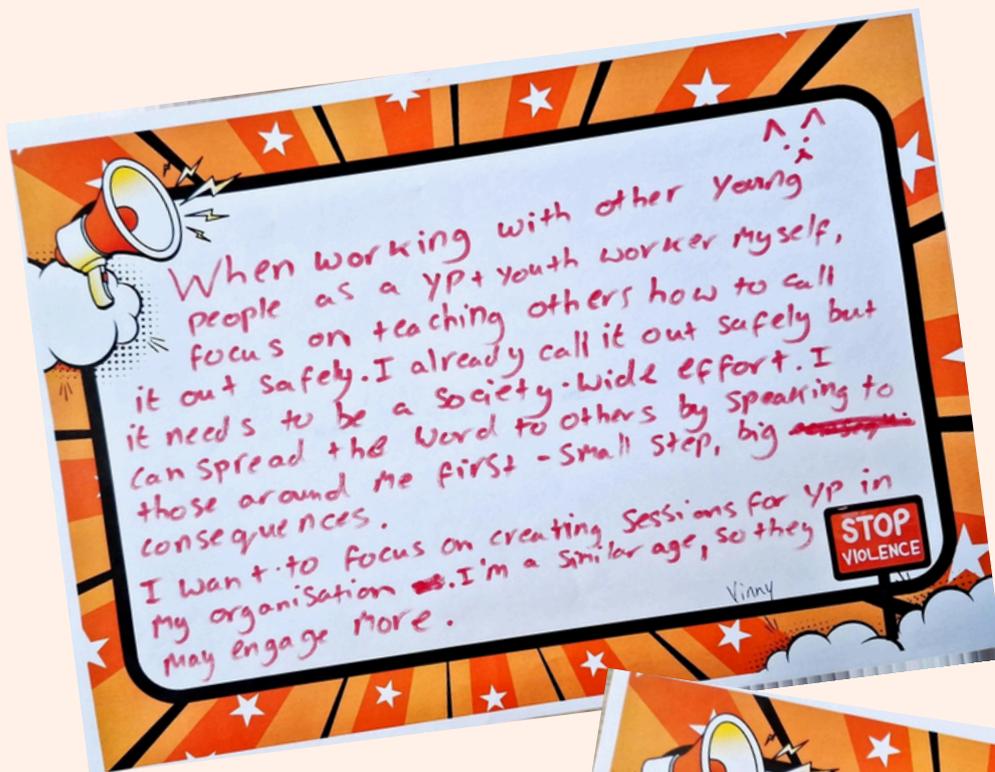


MAKE A STATEMENT

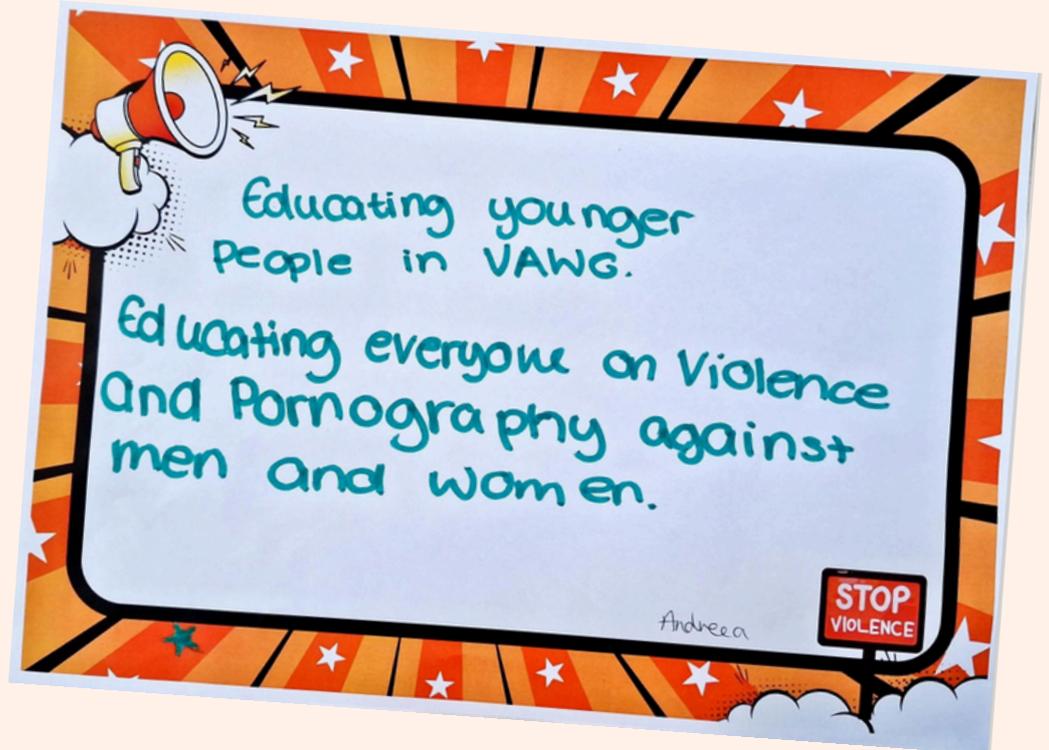
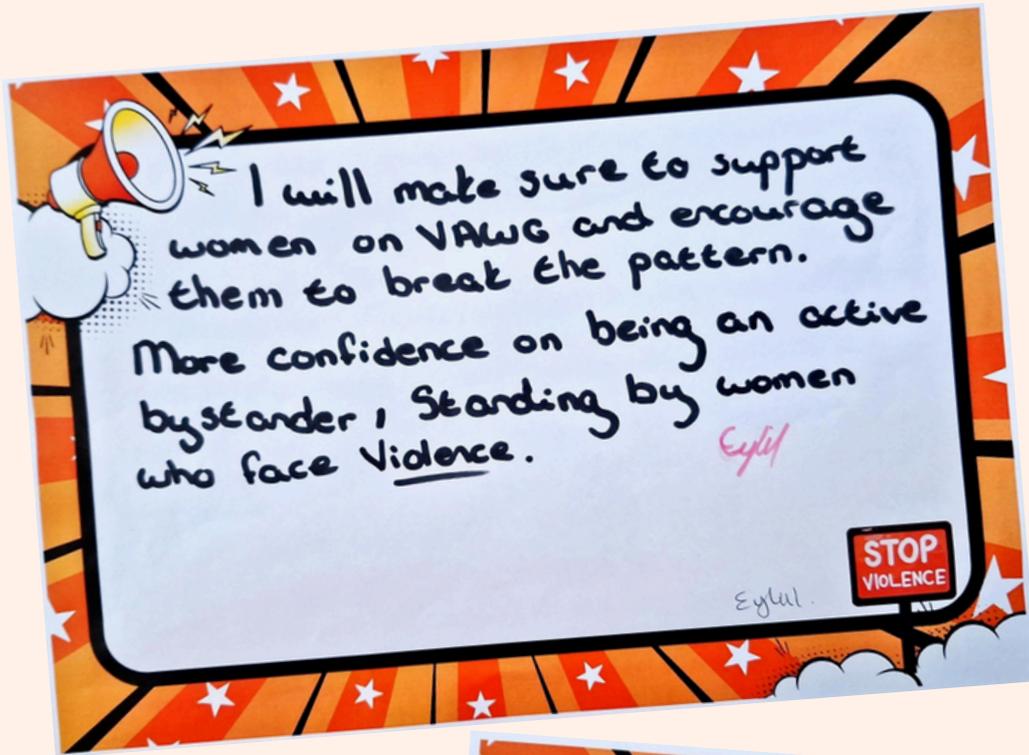
Reflecting on their learning, experiences and knowledge - the young people were asked to create a personal statement of something they were going to do to make a change and prevent Violence Against Women and Girls.



These are their statements



MAKE A STATEMENT



KITCHEN SINK LIVE



FILM

A huge thank you to Abby, Bradley and Corbyn from Kitchen Sink Live who documented the workshops and created a fantastic film.

[CLICK HERE TO WATCH THE FILM](#)

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to everyone who contributed to the success of the Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Youth Workshop Series.

Special thanks to:

Andreea, Claire, Eylul, Grace, Matty and Vinny whose contributions and perspectives shaped the outcomes of these sessions.

MYA RAISE Team, for their dedication to youth engagement and creating safe spaces for discussion.

Merseyside Police & Crime Commissioner, Emily Spurrell, and Superintendent Georgina Garvey, Director of the Merseyside Violence Reduction Partnership (MVRP), for their invaluable participation and commitment to tackling VAWG.

Sharna Kennedy, VAWG Lead and Nadine Bogan, Education Lead; for your continued support and ensuring the workshops were informative and impactful.

Kitchen Sink Live, for amplifying youth voices through creative platforms.

Contact

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Delivered by



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