



Our Streets Now

# Our Streets Now

Pilot Programme on  
Public Sexual Harassment in Wales

[www.ourstreetsnow.org](http://www.ourstreetsnow.org)

# Background & Overview

We ran eight sessions across five schools training 75 staff and facilitating workshops for 77 pupils. We aimed to target as wide a range of schools as possible. We worked with all English-medium schools of varying sizes and demographics.

The staff training sessions focus on understanding youth experiences of public sexual harassment (PSH), responding to disclosures, developing skills to teach about PSH, and developing a whole school approach which challenges the wider culture. The pupil workshops are called 'Changemaker workshops', and these provide a safe space for girls and marginalised genders to explore PSH and design their own projects for change, which are then presented back to staff members. After the sessions, schools were provided with resources on tackling PSH, including ready-made lesson plans, posters, safeguarding guidance and an assembly kit.

In November 2023, this project won the UN Women UK Safe Spaces Champion award for outstanding work tackling sexual harassment in public places.

All quotes included in this report are testimonials given as part of this pilot programme.

---

“

*“Opportunity to discuss challenging subject content and very knowledgeable trainers.”*

Assistant Headteacher

*“I enjoyed the freedom of opinion and how comfortable they were speaking to me and others.”*

Pupil

*“I felt really comfortable to talk about my opinions and I felt like I've learnt so much more than I would of if the school did it.”*

Pupil

*“Facilitators were amazing - knowledgeable and warm, they delivered brilliantly.”*

KS4 Phase Leader

”

---

# Programme Findings

## 1. PSH remains a prevalent issue, but is still not widely spoken about in schools

Our visits to schools confirmed previous research, including Estyn's findings, that PSH is a daily reality and a normalised occurrence for most female pupils, and something they would overwhelmingly not report to staff. Pupils were very appreciative of having a safe space to discuss how PSH affects them and how it should be tackled, and expressed that they had never had this opportunity before.

Particular knowledge gaps around PSH from staff included the early age at which PSH begins (and therefore how young the education needs to start), and how it can intersect with other forms of prejudice such as racism and homophobia to create specific and different experiences.

## 2. Schools are at very different stages in starting to tackle the problem, but all agreed that they need more external support

While one school was fully aware of the Estyn report and already implementing their best practice recommendations, another school had not heard of it and were surprised by the statistics about prevalence and low reporting rates.

Our team experienced very little pushback and teachers were overwhelmingly on board with Estyn's recommendations, but there were concerns about how to implement them given limited resources or external support. For example, one school had pupil voice programmes in place, but were not confident using this to discuss PSH without further training for staff. Safeguarding leads were committed to using the My Concern reporting system to report PSH, but there were worries that this data was not being looked at by their local authority, and that reporting it would not lead to them accessing support from them. In general, staff felt that too much responsibility was placed on them to tackle issues outside of their remits and capacity.

## 3. Levels of knowledge varies between staff teams

While pastoral and safeguarding staff had a strong understanding of safeguarding procedures relating to PSH, attitudes among the wider staff group were concerning. Many staff were not aware that PSH is a safeguarding issue if it happens outside of school, and in one school, there was widespread apathy and disbelief about the prevalence of PSH. Due to the normalisation of PSH, disclosures often happen in passing, rather than as a formal report, and training for all staff is therefore essential.

---

# Measuring Impact in the Staff Sessions

Teaching staff appreciated the interactive nature of the sessions, the Welsh-specific statistics, and the practicality of the 'next steps' and action planning that they were left with. The most common things that staff said they learnt were:

- ~ Practical tips for guiding conversations about PSH
- ~ Statistics showing prevalence and low reporting rates
- ~ An intersectional understanding (the importance of other factors such as racism/homophobia etc.)
- ~ Best practice for a whole school approach
- ~ Importance of changing the school culture as a whole

Staff were asked to rank from 1-10 how much they agreed with the following statements before and after the session, with 10 being strongly agree. The area with the most improvement following our session was having a clear action plan for tackling PSH at school.

	Before the session	After the session	Average Change	% with Positive Change
I understand young people's experiences of PSH and the impact it has on them	6.1	8.9	2.7	93%
I feel comfortable responding to disclosures of PSH	6.7	8.9	2.1	71%
I feel confident answering difficult questions about PSH	6.1	8.6	2.5	100%
I understand the significance of taking an intersectional approach	3.3	8.0	4.8	100%
I have a clear action plan for tackling PSH at school	3.3	9.0	5.8	100%

Finally, we asked staff after the session how much they agree with the following statement: I think having training on PSH is beneficial to my work with students. The average answer was 9.6 out of 10.



*“Engaging delivery, quality resources and nice atmosphere created”*  
Assistant Headteacher

# Measuring Impact in the Student Workshops

The girls and gender diverse students who took part in the sessions loved having an open space to discuss their opinions and experiences. Most of the students highlighted PSH being a daily reality but something they had never talked to each other or adults about before.

At the start of the workshops, some pupils were reluctant to engage, expressing that they thought nothing would ever change and that they didn't have a meaningful voice in school. However, all our facilitators observed students becoming more empowered and confident over the 3 hour workshop, and the overwhelming majority were very excited to share their project ideas at the end.

The most commonly mentioned priorities from students for tackling PSH at school included:

- ~ Safe spaces within schools for girls to share their experiences and express their views
- ~ Mixed gender workshops focussing on education for the boys on how PSH makes the girls feel
- ~ Male members of staff becoming ambassadors for the issue within school (yet there was a strong feeling that their own male teachers would not be knowledgeable enough to do this work yet)
- ~ Staff to be more empathetic, reassuring and validating when responding to disclosures from students, and giving the students options for what action should be taken

Students were asked to rank from 1-10 how much they agreed with the following statements before and after the session, with 10 being strongly agree. Despite this being the first time many of the students had talked about PSH, they already had strong opinions and understanding of what it is and why it happens, but a much lower knowledge of how to tackle it, and this was the strongest area of improvement, according to the feedback forms.

	Before the session	After the session	Average Change	% with Positive Change
I understand what PSH is and why it happens	6.5	8.7	2.2	84%
I know how to tackle PSH	4.8	7.9	3.1	96%

*“It is a safe space to talk about subjects that can be scary to talk about.”* Pupil

*“Our own input and ideas, safe environment, learnt a lot more about this subject”* Pupil



# Barriers & What Didn't Work So Well

## Varied “Buy-In” from SLT

The success and impact of the sessions was highly dependent on the level of ‘buy-in’ from senior leadership staff. The changemaker workshops aim to encourage pupil-led change in schools, but staff have to be committed to this process. While in one school the workshop was attended by the assistant headteacher who diligently took notes and engaged fully with the students, one school had no one at all come to listen to the student presentations.

Staff training sessions had lower potential for long-term impact when senior leadership wasn't in attendance. Some staff groups that we trained agreed that PSH needed to be a regular part of Health & Wellbeing education, and that all staff needed basic training in understanding PSH, but didn't have the influence in school to make that change.

## Short-Term Nature of the Project

Schools struggled to fit our sessions into their timetables at short notice, particularly for staff training, with the majority of staff sessions being delivered to quite a small group. One school was unable to schedule in staff training at all within the timeframe given, so we had to offer this session to a different school.

External interventions work best when providers are able to adapt the content to meet the school where they're at in their journey of tackling harassment, but only doing one day of work with the school didn't allow for this.

## Limited Staff Time

The extent to which staff are over-stretched became a barrier both in the way the sessions were set up and the potential for them to have long-term impact. For example, in one changemaker workshop, the school did not have time to brief us on some significant existing safeguarding and behavioural concerns of the pupils participating, were not able to provide a staff member to monitor the group and moved us to a different room across school without warning halfway through. All of which made managing behaviour difficult.

By the end of staff sessions, teachers were clear about their next steps, but often highlighted that they would struggle to find time to implement them.



*“I learnt that change will be cultural and must include all stakeholders”* Assistant Headteacher

*“I like how fun and unique it was and how we were able to voice our opinions in a judgement free way”* Pupil

*“Very interactive and informative”* Area Leader, Health & Wellbeing

---

# Recommendations & Looking Forward

## 1. Education for Mixed Gender Groups

All pupils need consistent education on understanding and challenging PSH, embedded into wider lessons on consent, starting right from the beginning of secondary school. Schools are consistently asking for this type of intervention from external providers, and students participating in changemaker workshops felt that they could not make change without this step taken first.

## 2. Tailored & All-Staff Training

Young people judge how serious an incident is by the reaction of the adults around them, and as all staff are likely to witness or hear disclosures of PSH from pupils, they need appropriate training. Training should also be tailored to the staff group, with specific safeguarding training for pastoral staff, training in how to teach about PSH for staff taking health & wellbeing lessons, and whole-school approach action planning time for SLT.

## 3. PSH Leads in School

There needs to be a consistent staff member taking the lead on this issue within school who is supported with external training, who has the opportunity to meet and share best practice with other PSH leads, and who is responsible for ensuring our work has long-term impact.

Thank you for the opportunity to make change in Wales and begin building a picture of the needs and barriers of secondary schools. We look forward to working with you again in the future.



*“I learnt that I can truly make a difference and stand up for myself and other girls”* Pupil

*“I liked the openness when talking about this difficult topic”*

Pupil

---