

# Education interventions

Education programmes to reduce violence against women and girls.

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## Bystander programmes

Bystander programmes to prevent sexual assault among young people aim to encourage young people to intervene when witnessing incidents or warning signs of sexual assault. The programmes are usually delivered in an educational setting, with the format of a single training or education session (for example, as part of university induction).

They are sometimes accompanied by advertising campaigns that post signs across university campuses to encourage students to act when witnessing incidents or signs of sexual assault.

Bystander programmes were found to have a beneficial effect on individuals' identification of incidents, knowledge of strategies and confidence in taking responsibility for intervening in sexual assault. However, there was little or no evidence of an effect of bystander programmes on gender attitudes, date rape attitudes and victim empathy, and no evidence was found to suggest that bystander programmes affect self-reported sexual assault perpetration among participants.

For full details, [see the College of Policing's Bystander programme evidence briefing](#).

- Moderate evidence

## School-based interventions

School-based interventions to reduce dating violence and sexual violence.

A systematic review in 2014 looked specifically at school-based interventions aimed at reducing sexual violence and violence in relationships (De La Rue and others, 2014).

Of the 23 included studies, the review found that students in the intervention group showed moderate increases in knowledge about dating violence, a lower acceptance of stereotypical 'rape myths', and moderate improvements in appropriately resolving conflicts in interpersonal

relationships. This finding is supported by a systematic assessment of what works to prevent violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence conducted by the Wales Violence Prevention Unit (Addis and Snowdon, 2021).

This assessment identified the following UK examples of these interventions: The Fourth R, Healthy Relationships Programme, Shifting Boundaries, Safe Dates.

- Moderate evidence

## Dating violence programmes

A 2013 systematic review found 38 studies that evaluated educational and skills-based interventions designed to prevent relationship and dating violence, targeted at young people aged 12 to 25 years (Fellmeth and others, 2013).

The effectiveness of these interventions was measured by changes in the number of episodes of relationship violence, changes in behaviours, attitudes and knowledge, and protective skills attained. This review found no evidence of an effect of these interventions on the outcomes reported.

- No evidence

## Empowerment or feminist self-defence classes

A systematic assessment of evidence review by the [Welsh Violence Prevention Unit](#) found that there is promising evidence on interventions focused on awareness raising among girls, and supporting them to recognise inappropriate behaviour by others, learn ways to keep themselves and their friends safe, feel empowered and enhance self-esteem.

Overall, girls in all age groups showed significant improvements in understanding the importance of help seeking for themselves and others where the programme is taught by carefully trained instructors with a strong empowerment focus.

A rapid evidence review for the European Parliament (Kelly and Sharps-Jeffs, 2016) also concluded that there is a growing evidence base that feminist self-defence can be effective in preventing violence.

- Moderate evidence

## Tags

Violence against women and girls