



ENGAGE, EDUCATE & EMPOWER
communities to end
VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS



Action Breaks Silence



Primary School Programme 2022-2023

Phase 1 – Summary of Impact

Action Breaks Silence is a frontline prevention educational charity, whose aim is to create a world where women and girls can live their lives free from male violence. The Charity's UK work focusses on BAME communities in London experiencing socioeconomic challenges and the Primary School Programme (for year 5/6 students) addresses issues such as gender inequality and toxic masculinity, which underpins harmful sexual behaviour. 75% of the students reached through the Action Breaks Silence Primary School Programme are non-white. The majority of schools hosting the programme are based in areas where domestic abuse and/or sexual offences are prevalent.

'Considering our school is in Lambeth, often considered a deprived area, the importance of these sessions for our children cannot be underestimated. The children see far too many news reports of violence, especially around London. I think it is vital for the children to be aware of the dangers that, especially, affect young girls and women, as well learn a range of techniques...to help protect themselves if times of danger occur.' Year 5 Teacher, Lambeth

Action Breaks Silence commissioned evaluation consultants from Charity Fundraising Ltd to evaluate the Primary School Programme supported through the London Mayor's MOPAC Grassroots VAWG Fund, which is delivered in two phases. Phase 1, delivered September to December 2022, reached 474 students in 6 schools in Lambeth and 4 schools in Hounslow (253 taking part in girls' groups and 221 taking part in boys' groups).



Each class was divided into two groups with girls and boys taught separately over 6 sessions. Monitoring and evaluation tools were co-produced with students and trainers and methodology has comprised quantitative and qualitative measures to include contextual pre-delivery polls, questionnaires and discussion and sessional observation. Feedback has been gathered directly from students and trainers as well as teachers for a fully rounded perspective on performance to date.

Impact

The tables below set out the programme outcomes and indicators relevant to Phase 1 of the programme, delivered in academic year 2022-23, together with impact data gathered at this interim point. For each outcome, overall attainment has been calculated as the total number of individuals agreeing across all indicators as a percentage of total respondents.

Students and future trainers increase knowledge and understanding of VAWG			
Indicator	Total response*	Number agreeing	% Achievement
Primary School children and future trainers become aware of perpetrators of abuse, types of abuse and abusive behaviours	424	331	78%
Primary School children and future trainers understand abuse is never acceptable	434	404	93%
Primary School children and future trainers understand abuse is never the fault of the victim / survivor	436	296	68%
Primary School children and future trainers improve understanding of ways in which girls and women are sometimes treated badly	422	354	84%
Future trainers understand the impact of male gender stereotyping on boys and men	9	6	67%
Totals	1725	1391	81%

*Response is based on consultation with 224 girls, 191 boys and 9 trainers (scored on the basis of knowing 'a lot' about the topic after delivering the programme). 14 teachers were consulted about the extent to which they felt the programme helps students understand that abuse is never acceptable or the fault of the victim / survivor. Response numbers vary slightly between questions.

Across all indicators assessing the extent to which students and future trainers increase their knowledge and understanding of violence against women and girls through participation in the programme, Action Breaks Silence achieved 81%. The most significant impact was in terms of supporting children to understand that abuse is never acceptable (93%).

In terms of student awareness of abuse and perpetrators, it is notable that only 69 out of 439 students, i.e. 16% said they had 'a lot' of knowledge in this area before taking part in the programme, while only 38% of boys had a high level awareness of types of abuse disproportionately affecting girls and women. One boy had said, before taking part in the course *"in the olden days girls got treated badly...it doesn't happen anymore."* This makes the achievement scoring in knowledge in these areas after taking part in phase 1 of the programme even more significant.

Initially students were asked about understanding that abuse is never the fault of the victim / survivor at the same time. However, it became apparent that in some cases students opinions about this were slightly more nuanced. Some students felt that an individual's own behaviour may sometimes be relevant in certain general situations of conflict, in terms of cause and effect - as opposed to victim blaming.

Students and future trainers improve attitudes towards gender equality			
Indicator	Total response*	Number agreeing	% Achievement
Primary School children and future trainers report beliefs that girls and women can do and achieve anything that boys and men can	438	395	90%
Primary School children report that girls and boys should be treated equally	413	389	94%
Primary School children change perceptions about 'gender-normative stereotypes' (where applicable)	414	359	87%
Future trainers believe that boys and men can be feminists / advocate for womens' rights	9	8	89%
Primary School children improve confidence and self-esteem (self-competence and self-love)	427	320	75%
Totals	1701	1471	86%

*Response is based on consultation with 224 girls, 191 boys and 9 trainers. 14 teachers were consulted about the extent to which they felt the programme improves perceptions around gender equality and develops confidence and self-esteem. Response numbers vary slightly between questions.

Across all indicators relating to gender equality, Action Breaks Silence achieved 86%, with particularly high scoring in terms of girls and boys being deserving of equal treatment (94%) and capable of achieving the same things (90%). 88 of 132 girls consulted before taking part in the programme, i.e. 67%, disagreed that girls and boys are treated equally.

Notwithstanding this, pre-participation polling and discussion indicated that many students held healthy views about gender equality although there were mixed views about whether inequalities still persist and some pre-conceived gendered ideas about personality traits and professions e.g. women being suited to caring professions, and men as footballers, pilots, business owners.

It would, overall, be more accurate to interpret scoring as a reflection of reinforcement of / fostering healthy ideas about gender, rather than improving attitudes. Students may still note differences between individuals of different gender, but don't automatically associate differences with superiority.

It is clear that, beyond the programme, students' experiences and perceptions will continue to be partly dependent upon home life and parental attitudes, however phase 1 findings suggest students complete their learning with an improved foundation of confidence on which to build.

'You told us to tell ourselves we're great and I got up the next morning and I washed my face. I went to the mirror and told myself (yeah - you're cool) and made tacos!' - Student, girls' group

Students and future trainers learn skills to keep themselves and others safe			
Indicator	Total response*	Number agreeing	% Achievement
Boys learn how to express feelings constructively / communicate assertively, with respect and empathy	190	136	72%
Primary School children feel more able to advocate for themselves and others (as active bystanders)	421	339	81%
Girls and future trainers are empowered with beliefs and self-defence skills to stand up for themselves	236	218	92%
Totals	847	693	82%

*Response is based on consultation with 221 girls, 192 boys and 9 trainers. 8 teachers were consulted about the extent to which the programme plays a role in preparing boys to be active bystanders and 6 were asked about the programme's role in equipping girls to stand up for themselves. Response numbers vary slightly between questions.

Once again scoring in relation to indicators relating to skills development, particularly in the context of self-advocacy was very high, averaging 82%. While boys were asked to self-score in relation to the extent to which they feel comfortable expressing their emotions (scoring 72%), 7 out of 8 teachers also observed progress in this area. 6 out of 8 teachers felt the programme would have a long-term positive effect on the boys.

'The sessions were fantastic in helping the children to consider their own self-esteem, positive thinking and activities they can do to lift their own well-being. Children discussed and understood acceptable and unacceptable behaviour towards others. Following on from this, they were taught ways they could be an upstander in a safe way. I believe the children would be able to use these skills going forward.' Year 5 teacher

Girls and trainers self-scored extremely highly in relation to being empowered with the beliefs and skills to stand up for themselves and 5 out of 6 teachers said they felt the programme would have long-term positive effect on the girls.

'The girls were taught crucial information that will benefit them personally and support their development of boundaries and healthy relationships.' - Year 5 Teacher

'I have been sat in with the girls' sessions for the majority of the Action Breaks Silence workshops. The workshops have been a great experience for the children with them learning about topics like gender stereotypes and equality as well as educating them about violence and abuse and basic self-defence techniques to defend themselves with. The girls particularly enjoyed the physical activities which have taught them invaluable ways to defend themselves and has also built up their confidence to be able to speak up as well as stand up for themselves in these difficult situations. I think it would be really beneficial for these workshops to become part of our school culture for the upper juniors.' Year 5 Teacher

Students were able to articulate sensible strategies to protect themselves / advocate for others if they were in danger e.g. using their voices to attract help, running away, using self-defence, telling a trusted adult, calling 999, removing themselves /

someone else from a potentially harmful situation. Boys also made comments about expressing their feelings / using self-love instead of letting it get to them if someone made them upset.

'I would say brother leave me alone what did I ever do to you, are you depressed or something, if you are I can help you, what is the problem.' - Student, boys' group

Schools observe positive benefit to involvement			
Indicator	Total response	Number agreeing	% Achievement
Schools report increased respect and empathy between students of different genders	8	6	75
The programme supports and supplements relevant areas of the National Curriculum	14	11	79
Totals	22	17	77%

The sample size of teachers consulted to date is quite small (14) however it is positive that 79% feel the programme complements the National Curriculum.

'The Team explains some very difficult areas for the young children to cover and we often support this work across some of our P.S.H.E. lessons surrounding equality and with workshops from other outside agencies regarding the dangers of being involved in gangs.' Year 5 Teacher, Lambeth

It is too early to be able to fully assess the extent to which the programme has a knock-on effect to playground behaviours, however of 8 teachers responsible for groups of boys, 75% felt that the programme plays a role in increasing respect and empathy between students of different genders, with students commenting that they would go forward treating others as they would like to be treated.

"Now a lot of girls are getting involved in the playground games that mostly boys played before." - Student, girls' group

School Satisfaction with the programme			
Satisfaction area	Total response	Number agreeing	% Achievement
The programme was a valuable use of time	14	10	71%
The programme used content and materials appropriate to age and ability	14	9	64%
The programme was run effectively by well prepared trainers	14	10	71%
The programme would benefit others and I would recommend it	14	10	71%
Totals	56	39	70%

Overall school satisfaction (70%) with the programme is positive, at 71% attainment in most areas, with scoring marginally lower (64%) in terms of the appropriacy of content and materials in relation to age and ability where there was some anecdotal comment about some material being quite complex / more suited to slightly older students.

Action Breaks Silence has had such a positive impact on the students in my class. It has empowered the children to develop their self-love, providing them with a safe space to grow and feel nurtured without judgement. The leaders of the sessions celebrate and encourage all of the children to be themselves (whatever that may look like) no one is forced to contribute; instead, they are praised for being unique. The diversity in the leaders who deliver the sessions are also a good representation of race, culture and backgrounds; this helps the children to relate and feel connected but most significantly represented (they can see themselves). In a world where mental health is at an all-time low and society has many expectations where children feel the constant need to be like everybody else! Before children can achieve their academic potential, it is important for them to build confidence in themselves and develop resilience when things don't go to plan. I believe this programme would have a significant impact on children's mental health if it was embedded in the Year 5/6 curriculum. The outcomes of these sessions would be endless but, I will leave you with some positive affirmations that the children embed in themselves from these sessions. "I am brave, I have a voice, I am courageous, I am beautiful, I am kind, I am enough!" - Year 5 Teacher, Primary School in Lambeth

An additional detailed testimonial is appended to this report to illustrate a school's experience of involvement in greater depth.

Train the trainers

Trainers delivering the courses in Primary Schools are a secondary beneficiary group. They are, in the majority, young people aged 25 and under who represent the communities in which the programme operates (both in terms of geography and ethnicity).

Trainers are unemployed (or only employed part-time elsewhere), have lived experience of violence against women and girls (VAWG) and have the potential to derive personal benefit from their involvement in terms of increased knowledge and understanding of VAWG and transferrable skills for paid employment elsewhere.



The cohort of trainers is still relatively small (with 9 having delivered the phase 1 programme). 7 out of 8, i.e. 88% of trainers reported no prior professional experience in the VAWG field prior to involvement with Action Breaks Silence. Before delivering the programme, only 2 out of 7 trainers, i.e. 29% reported having 'a lot' of

knowledge about perpetrators and the ways in which girls and women are abused, whereas 8 out of 9 i.e. 89% reported high levels of knowledge in these areas after delivering phase 1 of the programme.

In terms of what trainers hoped to gain from involvement in delivering the programme, lived experience was a powerful motivator in wanting to educate the next generation, to empower girls and improve equality.

Action Breaks Silence is a Charity that is complete testimony to my life and what I have experienced. I consider myself to be very lucky to be where I am now with what I have gone through and realise that I have become the person that I should have had around me as a child protecting me. Action Breaks Silence represents everything that I am passionate about and it touches on all the important issues young girls and women have been facing for hundreds of years. I am honoured at the chance to help educate...young girls and others with Action Breaks Silence.' - Trainer

In addition to high scoring in terms of the outcomes relevant to both students and trainers, the programme has universally had an incredibly powerful impact in terms of upskilling trainers with skills and experience in support of future employability. It has also empowered trainers to apply learning in their own lives in ways which benefit them personally.

Future trainers improve prospects			
Indicator	Total response	Number agreeing	% Achievement
Future trainers feel more empowered / are able to apply learning in their own lives	9	9	100%
Future trainers gain professional experience that enhances employability	9	9	100%
Future trainers develop transferrable skills for employment	9	9	100%
Totals	27	27	100%

Ways in which trainers said they had benefitted personally included:

- Development of professional skills to include public speaking, thinking on the spot during lesson delivery
- Knowledge in self-defence
- Greater understanding of toxic / healthy relationships
- Improved personal insight and ability to express feelings
- Improved self-love and confidence
- Working alongside different trainers and with different types of children; exposure to different perspectives

'I work for the Women's Equality Party and being able to empower them in meetings and share practical self-defence advice has been amazing. Critically I've also heavily worked on my own self-image and self-worth by allocating time for myself to show myself self-love every day.' - Trainer

Monitoring & Evaluation – Training & Mentoring

Charity Fundraising Ltd also provided monitoring & evaluation training and mentoring to Action Breaks Silence staff to develop capacity within the team. This support has included:

- Meetings / workshops with trainers to cover topics such as:
 - The purpose and value of monitoring and evaluation
 - Navigating the evaluation framework and tools
 - Methods of data collection
 - Interview and focus group skills
 - Differences between monitoring, evaluation and reporting
- Session observations to understand programme delivery and provide independent external feedback to Action Breaks Silence on the youth trainers
- Mentoring support for Action Breaks Silence’s Youth M&E Lead (Avisha, aged 19) covering areas such as survey set-up, data extraction and analysis. Avisha, a university student employed with Action Breaks Silence, took responsibility for creating online versions of questionnaires, collating and inputting survey data and qualitative transcripts and running report to facilitate evaluation. Avisha responded positively and professionally to the mentoring support, developing skills as part of the process which are transferrable to a range of academic and employment contexts.

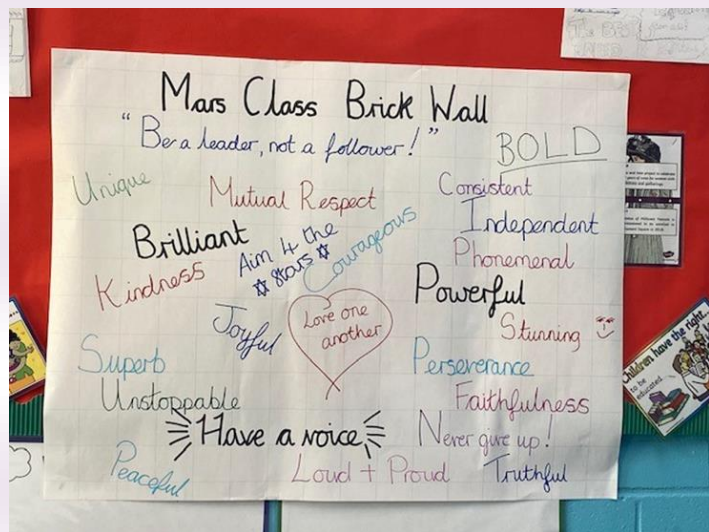
‘Analysing the data we collected was really informative for me. Many of the qualitative comments from students were shocking as I didn’t expect children of this age to have as much knowledge about abuse and gender inequality as they did. Their comments demonstrated the need for the programme in giving young people a space to talk about their experiences. Hearing their positive comments about how much the programme developed their self-esteem and self-confidence was especially rewarding as it makes clear the impact Action Breaks Silence is having.

Apart from this, being mentored by an external monitoring and evaluation company has been an amazing opportunity for me personally. I’ve developed crucial skills such as creating surveys as well as inputting and analysing data which will be extremely beneficial when it comes to writing future M&E reports.’ - Avisha

Critical Success Factors

Self-love and confidence: Topics that were particularly popular among the girls' group included learning about self-love; with exercises such as the 'brick wall' able to bring abstract concepts to life for students, irrespective of gender.

'It helped me realise some things that are great about me...it grew my confidence up...you guys showed me that loving myself is important.'
- Girls' group



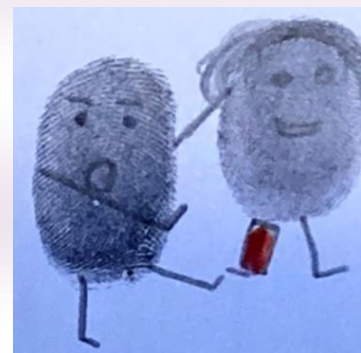
The 'see-saw' also helped boys understand how peoples' confidence levels can fluctuate.

'I say the most interesting topic was the see-saw because I am really shy and a lot of other people were confident so I thought people were just born like it but after the lesson I learnt I can be more confident.' - Student, boys' group

Staff Team: The staff team are critical to the success of the programme. Teachers felt that staff were effective in encouraging those with less confidence to participate and in providing a safe space for boys to share their feelings.

'The staff delivering the sessions are absolutely fantastic; they engage the children in the discussions and the activities in a friendly, yet extremely serious way, as not to make light of the serious subject they are delivering.' - Teacher

Self-defence: The practical teaching in relation to self-defence is a major critical success factor. Over $\frac{3}{4}$ of the girls referenced self-defence or some aspect of self-defence among their favourite topics, with one student intending to pass that knowledge down to younger siblings.



'In a life or death situation I now know how to protect myself' - Student, girls' group

Raising awareness and changing perceptions: The Action Breaks Silence approach was powerful in alerting boys to forms of stereotyping and abuse they hadn't even considered, such as catcalling.

'It taught me that even though you shout something nice to someone it's actually rude' - Student, boys' group

'The most useful thing I have learned is that I now know every abuse against women and girls and I want to stop it.' – Student, boys' group

Several students in the boys' group mentioned work around the jobs that people can do, irrespective of gender as particularly useful and enjoyed learning about famous female historical figures. One student had used this knowledge to help a family member considering job options.

'I learnt that a man and a woman can do the same things because some think that women are inferior and don't allow them to do the same things as men. The sessions where we determined whether or not a girl/boy could have the same job/personality was important and useful.' – Student, boys' group

Interactive delivery: Games and interactive activities were particularly popular among the boys' groups and were useful in facilitating the boys' groups to explore topics such as feelings and expressions of emotion. This is supported by comments from teachers who felt that interactive activities helped students remain focussed and engaged.

Challenges / Lessons Learned

Some of the material is, by nature, confronting and topics are complex, particularly for young students to fully comprehend, which was reflected in student and teacher comments. There was a sense that in some cases language or concepts e.g. perpetrator, empathy vs sympathy (even when explained) risked misunderstanding and/or was difficult for students to retain.

Certain session activities are noisy, which was mentioned by a number of students and particularly a student on the autistic spectrum who can suffer from hypersensitivity to sound.

Recommendations for further development

Phase 1 of the Primary School Programme has achieved considerable success to date, with very positive impact across all outcome areas. As such there is a lot of positive existing content and methodology to capitalise on at phase 2 and for future cohorts.

Among the girls' group, there was an appetite to learn more self-defence moves / practice more and to incorporate more role play and both the girls' and boys group would welcome the incorporation of additional games into the programme. This would address comments from trainers around challenges in helping students maintain focus / managing behaviour during information-heavy components of the programme. Varied tasks, movement around the classroom and pairs / small groupwork were all well-received as providing positive balance and should be further developed. A session to bring the whole class together at the end of phase 1 may also be welcomed.

It would be valuable to revisit the programme manual and training for staff to ensure content remains appropriate and accessible to the age group of students accessing the programme. Trainers would welcome the opportunity to revisit delivery of the boys' sessions after lesson 3 and the 'hero' concept to reduce risk of inadvertently reinforcing stereotypes.

Early data relating to trainers suggests they derive significant benefit from involvement. As the programme aims to empower young adults from disadvantaged communities who have lived experience of abuse as an additional beneficiary group, it will be important to continue to analyse impact data and assess scope to extend this area of work.

Suggestions made about other groups that might benefit from the training included parents (who might also benefit from a Q&A session in advance of the programme) and a handout to continue conversations at home. Teachers also felt there would be a lot of value in offering an inset day for staff.

Annex – Testimonial – Primary School in Hounslow

As the Year 5 leader at Southville Primary School I was really pleased to hear we had secured the 8-week programme with Action Breaks Silence.

Our school motto is 'learning for the world of tomorrow' and this has been an excellent opportunity to teach beyond the core curriculum and instil some of those key values within our pupils at such a crucial age where they are developing a real sense of identity, whilst also overcoming some challenges in changes they notice in themselves and others.

The programme began by gaining an insight into what the children understood by key terms and themes running throughout the course. Then, each week we have explored these in greater detail.

Giving the children tools to identify their own needs, as well as others, proves invaluable. As staff, we are already starting to notice some of the language changing between peers as they have better resilience and coping strategies for when they are feeling like they may have low self-esteem. The children are more a-tuned to empathising with the needs of each other and building each other up (as we practiced with building our walls in session 4). One member of staff mentioned they overheard a group of boys "filling up each other's beans" as they were trying to build up his confidence after not winning in a PE lesson. It is also such a significant time for pupils to develop their own sense of identify (tuning into the language the boy's group was taught has really enabled staff to encourage boys to do what they feel is the right choice for themselves).

For adults involved, we have been proud hearing each child find their voice, feeling secure in being open and honest about their experiences and beliefs. We have understood the need to listen to the preconceptions each gender has made about the abilities or roles of the opposite gender and can weave this into teaching as we move through the year.

As with everything we do in school, we encourage the pupils to take it out into the wider world. Many of the girls in particular have been keen to get home and share their new knowledge with mums, sisters, aunties etc. as they feel empowered following the sessions on self-defence. The cohort has also responded really positively to having known adults from the community involved in the sessions as they feel safe seeing familiar faces.

Having already had such a positive impact on the year group (before the sessions are complete), I would strongly recommend the partnership continues year on year. I can see the value the teaching has for children in upper key stage 2 and would highly recommend it being embedded into the curriculum for all children at this phase.