

BYSTANDER INITIATIVE TRAINING PILOT RESEARCH SUMMARY

The Bystander Initiative is a training programme designed to help female and male students recognise sexual harassment and abuse, and give them the skills and confidence to respond appropriately. It also looks at changing cultural norms that condone sexism and harassment. The Bystander Initiative was piloted in higher and further education institutions across Wales by Welsh Women's Aid and a research project to determine its effectiveness has been conducted. A mixed method approach was used, with triangulation to produce reliable and robust data. An attitudinal survey was completed before and after the training by all students who attended the pilot; this survey was also available online to all students to establish a base data set. As well as completing the questionnaire for comparative purposes, attendees of the pilot also took part in a pre and post training focus group to gain rich data into the reasoning for their answers and further comments. Finally, the students who attended the course completed a confidential course evaluation. Key results and findings are included below.

Knowledge and Attitudes

The findings from all 3 sources have shown that students who attended the programme have increased their knowledge of domestic abuse and sexual violence, and have also changed their attitudes in line with the knowledge they have received. For example— results improved by 13% with all students now knowing that even if a woman does not say 'no' to sexual intercourse it can still be rape—that consent is the presence of a yes and not the absence of a no.

"Before like I wouldn't know what classes as an assault or whatever but now that I know what's wrong you feel like more confident to intervene"

I found the programme very good. It really opened my eyes to the abuse that goes on and how you can intervene without actually intervening. Very informative and very helpful. Really pleased I took part! :)

Replicable Results

Similar positive results could also be expected from the wider student population following training in the Bystander Initiative due to the similarities between the before data from trainees and base cohort data.

Intervention

All 3 layers of data also demonstrate that following the training, university students can identify potential situations, know different ways to intervene, and have improved confidence that they would intervene; for example, following the training, 97% of attendees said they are more likely to intervene in everyday life. This was also shown in the increase in self-reported positive actions, where there was an increase of 27% in people who reported challenging a friend over using sexist language.

"I'd have far more confidence in myself because like you do loads of little things all the time anyway and this is no different"

I think before I sort of thought of intervention as being a big heroic act, I didn't really think of it as something as small as asking someone if they were okay or like if they wanted to talk something through.

Future Delivery

Throughout the report, it has been raised that the Bystander Initiative is not as effective when delivered to mature students (30 years old plus), but that students think the programme should become compulsory for all students aged 16 upwards. Findings also indicate that the Bystander Initiative is best received by students in 4 separate sessions which last 2 hours each, followed by having 2 longer sessions of 4 hours. Students also stressed that any future delivery of the Bystander Initiative should be conducted by external violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence professionals (in line with findings from previous bystander strategy reviews) due to the knowledge needed, the sensitivity of topics and disclosures throughout and following delivery.

'this [programme] was extremely helpful in helping me address my own problems with domestic violence. The women here are a credit to the wider organisation they represent. I felt comfortable enough to ask about support groups and getting my own help. This was amazing and very helpful'