

THURSDAY 21

**CARMARTHENSHIRE
YOUTH COUNCIL PRESENTS**

NOVEMBER 2014

ABUSE AT HOME YOU'RE NOT ALONE

**A REPORT ON OUR YOUTH CONFERENCE LOOKING AT
DOMESTIC ABUSE AND HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS**

**- FEATURING THE PEOPLE IN THE KNOW -
YOUNG PEOPLE FROM ALL OVER CARMARTHENSHIRE,
CHRISTOPHER SALMON, POLICE CRIME COMMISSIONER FOR DYFED POWYS;
JANET WEAVER, WELSH WOMEN'S AID; DAVID ASTINS, CARMARTHENSHIRE**



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ABUSE AT HOME, YOU'RE NOT ALONE!

CARMARTHENSHIRE YOUTH COUNCIL YOUTH CONFERENCE REPORT 2014

BACKGROUND

Carmarthenshire Youth Council run a Youth Conference every year in partnership with Carmarthenshire County Council to gather the views of young people on issues important to us which affect our lives today and in the future.

We decided to focus on the topic of domestic abuse for this year's Youth Conference following consultation with various young people across the county. Young people were asked what issues were most important to them and effected them the most on a day to day basis.

These consultations were held informally by individual CYC members, all of whom fed back their findings at a meeting early in the summer. The most frequently mentioned topics were bullying and domestic abuse. After much discussion we decided that the theme of our 11th Annual Youth Conference would be Abuse at Home, looking at the importance of healthy relationships, as there are currently fewer discussions taking place on this subject.

The conference was largely planned by CYC members, Rebekah Lane, Brittany Bingham, and Kelisha Jones who were nominated by fellow members to take on tasks such as meeting with Parc Y Scarlets and Carmarthenshire County Council officers, as well as working on the posters and information to publicise our conference.



Prior to the Youth Conference, we met with some representatives from Carmarthenshire Domestic Abuse Service and received basic training on domestic abuse to help with planning the conference, and more specifically the workshops we facilitated on the day. After receiving this basic training we all felt more confident in identifying different types of domestic abuse, as well as having a deeper understanding of the effects of abuse in the home.

Decision makers, guests and organisation that had an interest in Domestic Abuse were invited to support our conference, to ensure that what the young people who attended were saying has the best possible chance of being picked up and acted upon.

THE CONFERENCE

We held our conference on Thursday the 20th of November in order to coincide with the 25th Anniversary of Universal Children's rights Day. The conference was held at Parc Y Scarlets, Llanelli and we conducted and delivered workshops to over 150 young people aged 11 – 25 years old from all over the county. The purpose of these activities was to broaden their understanding of what domestic abuse is, as well as gathering their views on the topic.

We were so happy to have Mr Christopher Salmon, Police and Crime Commissioner for Dyfed Powys, at the conference to deliver the Key Note Speech to young people and guests. Other guest speakers were Janet Weaver from Welsh Women's Aid and David Astins from Carmarthenshire County Council.

The morning session consisted of workshops where young people took part in group tasks and discussions on domestic abuse and what it meant to them. The afternoon was a Theatre Forum discussion facilitated by Mess Up The Mess Theatre Group, who re-enacted 3 scenes of domestic abuse which were adapted from real life experiences of young people in Carmarthenshire.



DOMESTIC ABUSE, THE LOW DOWN

Young people were given an insight on what domestic abuse is and given a chance to discuss their perception of Domestic Abuse. A large proportion of young people that attended the conference initially perceived domestic abuse as 'a man hitting a woman', although they were able to identify and list other themes or examples of domestic abuse this was the most popular view when asked what do you think domestic abuse is. This is clearly something which needs to be dealt with on a basic level, and one suggestion for addressing this was to teach primary age children about basic respect in all relationships, and possibility giving some implicit references to domestic abuse.

It was good to see that most young people could identify the 5 main themes of domestic abuse. None, however, were able to define domestic abuse.

5 main themes of Domestic abuse;

- Physical abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Mental Abuse
- Financial

The Government definition of domestic violence and abuse is:
'Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality'

(Home Officer March 2013)



MAIN FINDINGS

Some of the main concerns and options raised by young people surrounding domestic abuse and healthy relationships were:

GOSSIPING V'S PASSING ON INFORMATION

- Students understand that some information needs to be passed on but teachers just gossip
- Teachers had a lack of respect for pupils/teacher confidentiality as they gossip in staffrooms.
- Teacher more often than not let students know that they are aware of their personal situation when there is no need.
- Some teacher who don't need to know end up knowing students personal business.

TELLING SOMEONE ABOUT DOMESTIC ABUSE

- Young people wouldn't discuss domestic abuse between their parents, for fear of being taken into care and would break up their parents.
- Young people would more likely tell a friend or buddy.
- Young people would not turn to the police for support in an abusive relationship as that was seen as an 'extreme option' and there were concerns that police may press charges against their wishes
- Some professionals cannot be trusted

RAISE AWARENESS AND BETTER SUPPORT

- Domestic abuse and healthy relationships should be taught in schools, as early as primary schools.
- More services and help for young people in Carmarthenshire who are experiencing abuse or know they are being abusive but don't know how to stop it.
- There's a need for more Carmarthenshire specific help lines
- Training for teachers
- More funding should be diverted to refuges in Carmarthenshire.
- Police do not respond soon enough.
- More preventative work is needed, rather than focusing on supporting young people after they have been abused.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

The conference was the first step to us making sure that that decision makers and organisations that can do something about it hear your views and that your opinions are taken into account as the event ended with a feedback session where young people were able to speak directly to decision makers about their views on domestic abuse and what could be done to improve services. Young people highlighted the issues they felt needed to be changed to ensure that fewer young people experience domestic abuse.

At the end of 2014 we (Carmarthenshire Youth Council) attended a meeting of the Carmarthenshire Children and Young Peoples Partnership (CYPP) to provide feedback on the conference and to highlight the main findings of this report.

It is hoped that members of the CYPP will take into account the views and opinions of young people when making decisions on current or future Domestic Abuse Services and Safeguarding issues in Carmarthenshire. We will be contacting the CYPP in the summer of 2015 to receive feedback.

This report will be distributed to all School Councils, Head Teachers and organisations as possible in Carmarthenshire, furthermore we will be using our networks to pass this report on to other Youth Councils/Forums in Wales to see if any of the issues affecting young people in Carmarthenshire are faced by young people across Wales.

KEEPING IN TOUCH

We will be posting updates and feedback on our website where you can keep in touch so...

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