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Growing Against Violence (Registered Charity No: 1163738) provides evidence-based public health and public safety education and training for children and young people. The Charity grew out of a 2008 partnership with London's Metropolitan Police Service and has since been delivered to over 110,000 students in more than 500 schools, making it the largest programme of its kind in the U.K. This primary prevention initiative focuses on skills development (e.g., refusal skills, conflict resolution, mood management) and issues awareness in an effort to build resilience in young people, challenge moral disengagement, and promote engagement with pro-social peers and behaviours. Results of a randomized controlled trial confirm G.A.V. is successful in its aims.[1] The award-winning curriculum critically examines such topics as street gangs, knife crime, cyber-bullying and social media, sexual violence and child exploitation, and police powers to stop and search.

G.A.V.'s Core Principles

Protection. Highly sensitive disclosures are common in our work, thus safeguarding is paramount. G.A.V. works hand-in-hand with boroughs and local authorities and Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCB) to assess individual risks and needs, identify referral pathways, signpost support, and identify emerging trends. G.A.V. also improves teachers' awareness of warning signs of abuse and exploitation and confidence in responding appropriately. Likewise, young people are given strategies that facilitate positive peer support.

Prevention. G.A.V. provides the tools for young people to make heathy and informed decisions. G.A.V. intervenes early. It is cost effective and by reducing future demand, eases the financial burden in times of austerity. It facilitates the identification of young people at risk and encourages early intervention by others.

Partnership. G.A.V. has won the trust and confidence of schools and communities by putting young people first. It has built a huge delivery footprint in schools and Pupil Referral Units (P.R.U.s) and is explicit in its aim to improve police-community relations. Thanks to a broad-reaching Memorandum of Understanding with Middlesex University, the program is also subject to ongoing peer review.

[1] Densley, J., Adler, J., Zhu, L., & Lambine, M. (2016). Growing Against Gangs and Violence (GAGV): Findings from a process and outcome evaluation. *Psychology of Violence*, 6(2).

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The Curriculum

G.A.V currently delivers an integrated and coordinated programme that follows young people from school year six to school year ten. Content is universally delivered to entire school year groups, thus providing a consistent continuum of engagement. All sessions run 90-100 minutes, as follows:

Friends vs. Friendly (Year 6)

This interactive workshop teaches refusal skills and builds awareness of negative peer pressure. Emphasis is placed on the differences between being “friends” and being “friendly”. We look at how certain “friends”, especially those in negative peer groups like gangs, are nothing of the sort and will only attract trouble.

We demonstrate how older peers groom and coerce young people. Our aim is to help young people read the signs of gang membership, recognise how gangs recruit and understand the manipulative and coercive nature of gangs and gang members. This dynamic session highlights what gangs are really about and how they exploit young people and put them and their families at risk. We examine why gangs are not conventional friendship groups and challenge the "no snitching culture" empowering students to reject this. We address students’ anxiety about moving up to secondary school, and provide practical advice about staying safe, avoiding bullying and resources for seeking help if needed.

Gangs: Myths & Realities (Year 7)

Building upon the foundation set in Friends vs. Friendly, students explore in detail the difference between gangs and friendship groups. Our intent is to reduce gang activity by providing young people with the information they need to make informed decisions about gang association.

Students critically examine why people join gangs and the criminal activity that gangs partake in. This session aims to deglamourize gangs by providing young people with the essential reality check in relation to how gangs operate. We demonstrate why gangs do not offer respect, money, excitement or a sense of belonging akin to a family. We look at the criminal component of gangs (including the sale and distribution of drugs) demonstrating the consequences of selling drugs on the gang’s behalf, associating with gang members and believing popular myths about gangs.

Knives: Choices & Consequences (Year 7)

Developed in partnership with the Association of Surgeons of Great Britain and Ireland

Young people explore how gang membership increases the odds of becoming a perpetrator or victim of knife crime and why street weapons intended to protect are liable to endanger. The message is simple: carrying a knife offers neither protection nor respect. Through real life case studies, we explore Joint Enterprise and define what constitutes a weapon. The session explores the legal, physical and psychological consequences of knife crime at the individual, family, and community level bringing the experiences and messages of Surgeons, Police, victims’ families and offenders’ using specially commissioned film material.

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Anti-Social Media: Relationships (Year 8/9)
Developed in partnership with academics from Goldsmiths College, University of London

This lesson examines peer-on-peer bullying and the communicative role of smart phones and social media in grooming children and facilitating child sexual exploitation (CSE). The aim is to promote safe use of social media and the pursuit of healthy peer relationships. Students learn about their right to privacy and laws surrounding sexting, the distribution of child pornography, and cyberbullying. Students are made aware of the signs of grooming (both online and offline) and CSE and empowered to report it if they encounter it. For instance, we signpost to a variety of online and offline support services and national campaigns such as This Is Abuse and Disrespect Nobody.

Students acknowledge the tendency to participate in victim blaming and practice being a defender not a bystander or abuser. Students come to embrace their status as digital natives and take responsibility for both their actions online and any collateral consequences offline. But students also explore the positive aspects of social media use, focusing on the Re-Think app, which was made for young people, by a young person.

Anti-Social Media: Videos and Violence (Year 8/9)

This session explores how individuals involved in street gangs, terror groups, and hate groups utilise technology to advertise, conspire, organise, boast and taunt. In doing so, however, they make themselves and others vulnerable to police scrutiny and rival predation.

Students examine how violent media acts as a facilitator for people already prone to violence. Students learn that popular culture does not *cause* violence but rather provides a style for how membership in violent groups is performed and a lens through which violent people interpret their lives. They identify how sharing content online can put themselves and others at risk of recruitment into violent groups. Students also learn how crime and violence is arranged via social media and how hate groups target young people via online gaming and create memes, videos and graphics with the intention of inciting hatred.

Stop & Search (Year 8/9)
Developed in partnership with Scotland Yard's Territorial Support Group

This session explores police stop and search powers and features specially commissioned visual material. The intention is to improve the confidence of young people in police generally and in the effective use of stop and search as a tool to keep them safe specifically. Students will understand how and why stop and search is often conducted with limited or contradictory information. Through role-play, discussion, and a real-time emergency response "table top" exercise, they explore procedural justice, profiling and intelligence-led stops, their rights and responsibilities in a stop and search scenario, and the consequences of young people and Police negatively stereotyping each other.

It's Not Just Girls, Gangs & Consequences (Year 10)
Developed in partnership with Victim Support Services and Scotland Yard's Sexual Offences, Exploitation and Child Abuse Command (SOECA)

This lesson separates boys and girls to discuss sensitive and emotive issues regarding sexual violence and child exploitation. We challenge victim blaming, "rape myths", and the

normalisation of sexual violence and CSE within gangs. Students analyse a case study of gang associated sexual violence and its implications. Realistic consent scenarios illustrate risky situations in which boys and girls may find themselves and demonstrate what is required for true consent. Participants review the investigative (crime) and disciplinary (school) processes for sexual violence cases and the consequences for those who rape.

This session makes it clear that both boys and girls can be victims of CSE and sexual violence; particularly those who associate with gangs, as rape is used by them as a weapon of choice. We ensure that students understand that rape is used to control both girls and boys but also provide reassurance that there is help and support available for rape victims. Whilst the focus is on peer-on-peer abuse, we also cover adult-to-child CSE; encouraging young people to recognise and report it – particularly in the environments in which adults do not regularly frequent (on social media, in parks or at parties).

Highly trained and skilled facilitators create a safe space in which young people can ask questions and clarify definitions of grooming, rape and CSE. We encourage students to assess risks and set appropriate boundaries and encourage young people to define and develop positive and healthy relationships. Robust local referral pathways and signposting to local support services are provided within the session and to school staff who sit in on the sessions in order to provide on-going support to students.

Parent & Family Session

This 90-minute session seeks to educate and inform parents about gangs and the GAV programme. Parents are given an overview of the academic curriculum and receive an academic and police perspective on gangs and serious youth violence, including the “push” and “pull” factors that account for gang association. Parents are made aware of the warning signs of gang membership and advised on appropriate interventions. Gang recruitment processes and the roles and risks to girls involved in gang culture are identified. The session celebrates the fact that the vast majority of young people lead positive lives, but also promotes active parental engagement, boundary setting, and the importance of collaboration and communication between families, schools, and communities to end gang and serious youth violence.

Contact

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