



DEVON COUNTY COUNCIL

Education, Arts & Libraries Directorate

Devon Educational Psychology Service

Domestic Violence Schools Liaison Consultancy Project

Claire Bedford and Angie Mudge
Educational Psychologists

Devon
Educational
Psychology
Service



DEVON COUNTY COUNCIL

Education, Arts & Libraries Directorate

St John's Lane
BARNSTAPLE
Devon
EX32 9DD
Tel: 01271 388700
Fax: 01271 388709

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SCHOOLS LIAISON CONSULTANCY PROJECT

**Claire Bedford
Angie Mudge**

Devon Educational Psychology Service

Introduction

In September 2004, ADVA (Against Domestic Violence and Abuse) in Devon approached the Educational Psychology Service to co-ordinate and evaluate a pilot project to raise awareness of domestic violence (DV) issues within school communities.

There were two aspects to the project:

- DV training to be delivered in schools;
- Wolf & Water 'Home Ground' arts based package to run in schools - curriculum work looking at issues around healthy relationships and forming part of PSHE work.

Thirty nine target schools were listed by ADVA in the Bideford and Barnstaple areas of North Devon.

Aim of Project

To improve the knowledge and skills of staff (teaching, non-teaching and community support agencies) within identified schools in North Devon about DV issues and the role of the school in relation to these issues.

Objectives

- To enable as many of the identified schools to run DV awareness training including their support agencies (at least 15 schools).
- To enable at least five schools to run 'Home Ground' curriculum work between October and March 2005.
- To evaluate the project.

Co-ordination of the Project

The thirty nine schools were sent information from Phil Norrey (Director of Education, Arts and Libraries) highlighting the funding available for training and drama work in schools on DV issues. Schools were asked to contact Rachel Martin (Domestic Violence Prevention Co-ordinator) for details.

The educational psychologists became involved at this point and the process was:

- following up the initial contact by personally calling the listed schools to discuss the possibility of them taking up a training session on DV and/or running the Home Ground programme;
- if the school decided they wanted the training, they were asked to give three possible dates on which they could host the training session;
- these possible dates were given to the DV trainers so they were able to confirm their availability;
- the educational psychologists then confirmed the date and time of the training session to the schools;
- trainers were then given the contact name and telephone number of the school to make final arrangements;
- Wolf and Water were given the contact names and telephone numbers of four schools which had expressed interest and which met the company's criteria of pairs of schools within a short travelling distance of each other.

The Process

A total of twenty training sessions took place over the Spring Term and beginning of the Summer Term 2005.

The training sessions were mostly run as twilight sessions after school (3.30 – 5.00 pm). Two schools ran the training as part of a day's INSET.

All participants were asked to fill in evaluation forms (see Appendix).

The Wolf & Water work is currently running in three schools (Summer Term 2005). These are East the Water Primary School, St Margaret's Junior School and Yeo Valley Primary School.

Analysis of training evaluation forms

The evaluation forms that were completed following training sessions were subjected to quantitative and qualitative analysis.

Of the 20 training sessions, 17 took place in primary schools, 2 in secondary schools and one in a special school. Evaluation forms were available from 13 sessions, with a total number of 159 being returned. The breakdown of these according to school type is as follows:

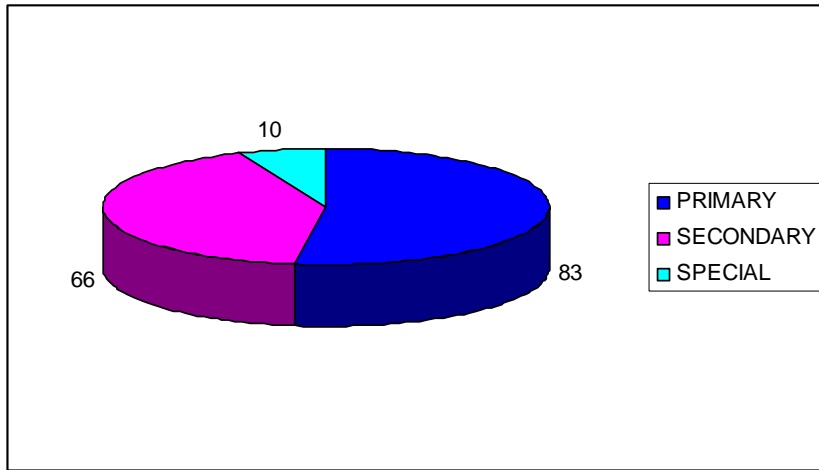


Figure 1 Evaluation forms returned according to school type

The evaluation forms were completed by school staff in a range of roles as shown below. From the evaluation forms returned, there was no evidence of community-based professionals with links to the schools having been involved.

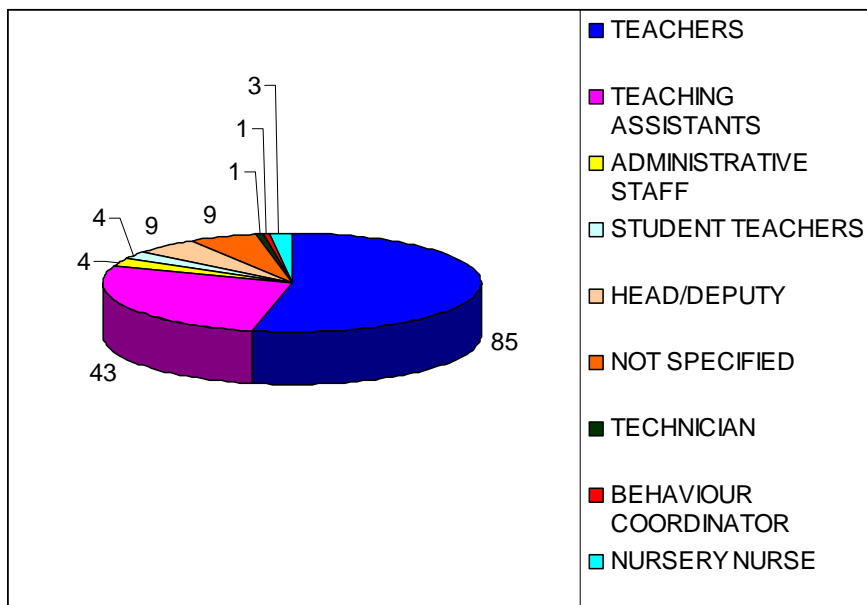


Figure 2 Evaluation forms returned according to job role

The first 4 questions on the evaluation form asked how well the objectives of the training had been met, on a scale from 1 (met completely) to 6 (not at all). The average responses for these four questions can be seen in Figure 3.

The wording on the form was modified after a few training sessions from 'To demonstrate', 'To consider' and 'To display' to include the word 'begin', e.g. 'To begin to demonstrate some understanding...' This resulted from the early perceptions of the trainer that the objectives were rather ambitious given the length of time

available for most sessions. The early and later evaluation forms were not analysed separately.

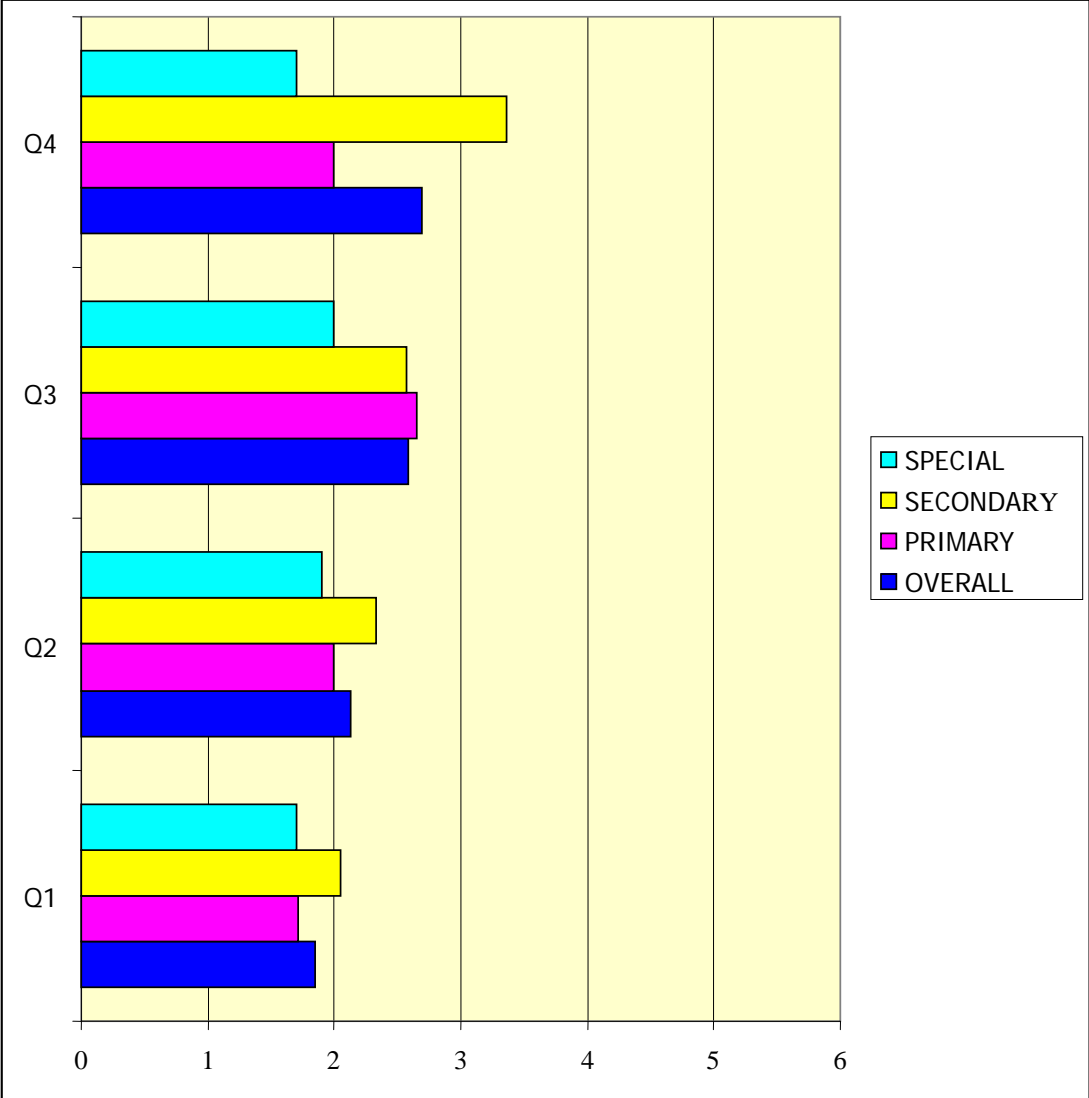


Figure 3 Average ratings for meeting course objectives

Question 1 asked to what extent participants were able to begin to demonstrate some understanding of the impact of domestic violence. Comments included those that indicated that this was a valued part of the session:

- 'very thorough',
- 'very informative'
- 'good group discussion and outline case history'.

There was considerable variation in thoughts about the amount of time dedicated to this area:

- 'would have liked longer session'
- 'presentation was excellent but it was just too rushed. Some very deep

awareness just touched on which was a shame'
'far too much time spent on this – not relevant to our work with children'
'1 hour spent on the abuse cycle was too much for us to know'

Question 2 asked the extent to which participants were able to begin to demonstrate an understanding of the effects of DV on children and young people, including how it may affect their education. Comments on this question were mostly related to not enough time being allocated:

'would have liked more time on this as it is relevant to my job'
'not enough time spent on effects in children'

Questions 3 and 4 related to how well the course helped participants to begin to consider techniques for engaging and assisting children and young people who have experienced DV and to identify ways of better responding within schools. It can be seen from these results that, although responses were still positive overall, the objectives relating to what might need to happen in schools to support this group of children and young people were perceived as less well met than those relating to more general awareness of DV and its impact. Many comments related to lack of time to cover this adequately and some indicated that these issues would need to be returned to:

'I would like further training to augment this'
'more discussion in school needed'
'a topic of conversation for future staff meetings'

Question 5 asked for a rating of the trainer's approach from 1 (excellent) to 6 (very poor). The responses to this question were very positive as can be seen in Figure 4.

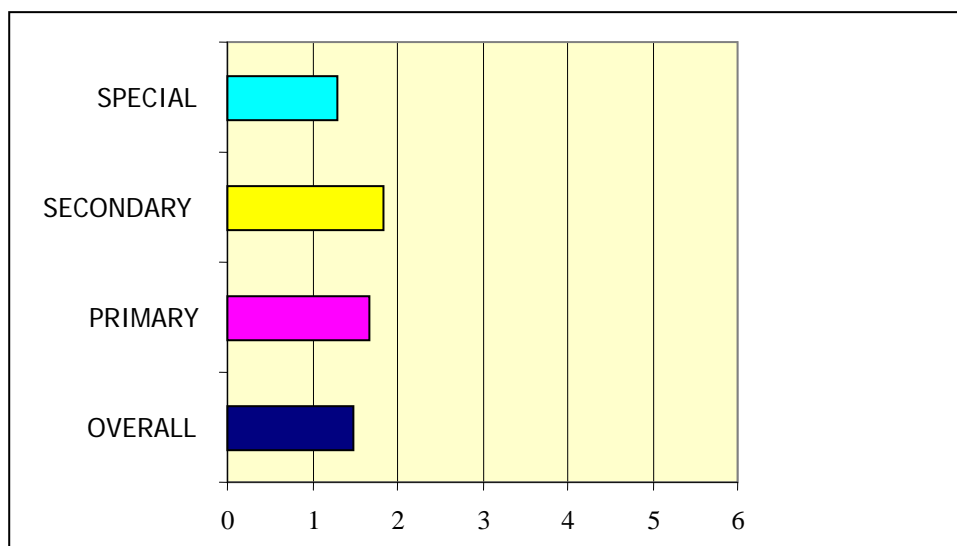


Figure 4 Average ratings of trainer's approach

Questions 6 and 7 asked participants to consider their prior knowledge of DV (1 = Excellent to 6 = Poor) and the extent to which the workshop improved knowledge and skills (1 = a great deal to 6 = not at all). Figure 5 shows that prior knowledge

tended to be rated towards the 'very poor' end of the continuum. However, participants were positive in their ratings of the extent of improvement in skills and knowledge following the workshop, as can be seen in Figure 6.

On question 7, there was more of a difference between the Primary and Secondary school responses than on for other questions, with the secondary school responses tending to be less positive.

Three respondents distinguished between knowledge and skills in their responses to question 7, indicating that the workshop had improved their knowledge more than their skills.

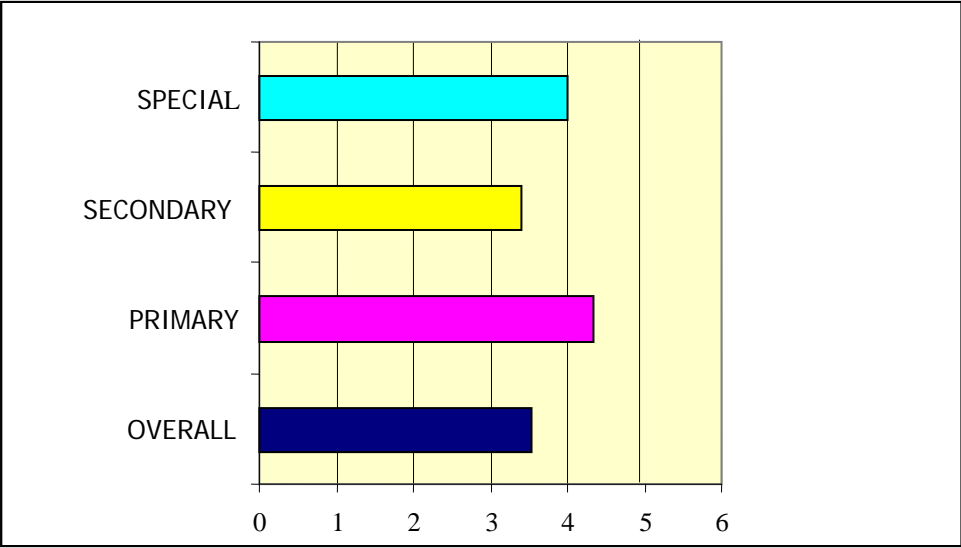


Figure 5 Average ratings of prior knowledge of DV

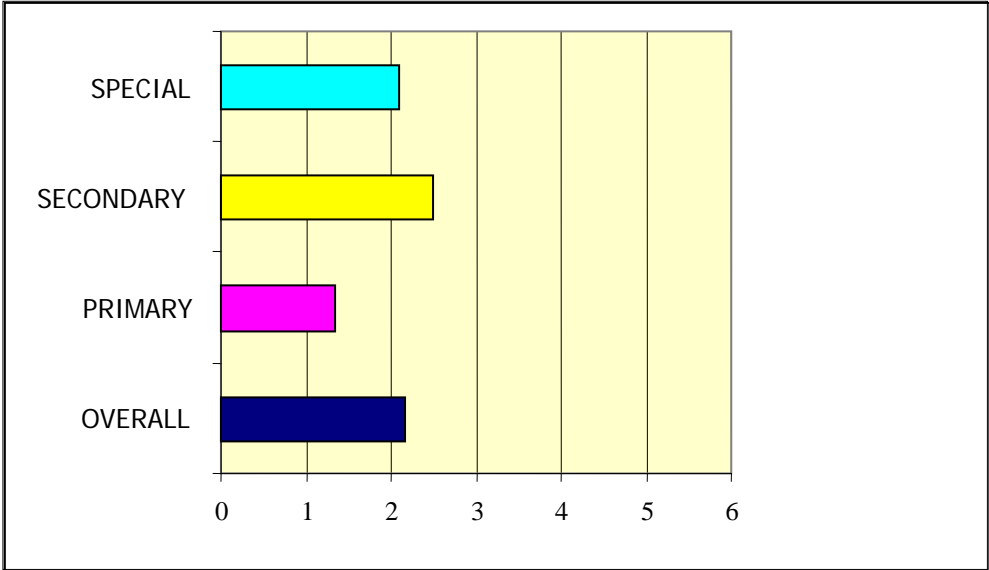


Figure 6 Average ratings of improvement in knowledge and skills

Question 8 followed up question 7 by asking participants in what particular area the workshop had improved knowledge and skills. Several themes arose in responses to this question:

- the process and development of DV
- general awareness
- what DV includes
- specific facts e.g. incidence

Question 9 asked participants to comment on what further training they would like to further improve knowledge and skills. The most common responses related to wanting to know more about how to deal with children and young people who are experiencing (or who are thought to be experiencing) DV – i.e. what can staff in school actually do and say. This is illustrated by comments such as:

'perhaps more practical skills for helping affected children'
 'what we can do as teachers'
 'how I can help if we have children/families in school'
 'a more practical session related to skills'

Another frequently occurring theme was further non-specific training:

'I would like to be trained up to support pupils'
 'A further short course'
 'ongoing training for one member of staff'
 'reviews/refreshers annually or bi-annually'

Other responses reflected the need for further work in school to try to incorporate what had been discussed:

'Embedding good practice in Key Stage 1'
 'time in school to discuss how to tackle it as a staff'
 'incorporate it into PSHE'

Some were more specifically related to the use of resources:

'looking at resources please'
 'training for using resources'

The final question asked participants to identify what else they felt would help them support children and young people experiencing DV. Many of the responses to this question were similar to some of the responses to previous questions. For example there were references to further training and specifically to practical strategies for supporting children and young people:

'more real-life examples of how others have dealt with these issues'
 'techniques, how to talk to them'

Related to practical issues, several participants mentioned the need for clear systems to be in place in school:

'school protocol should be made clear'
 'school systems to identify children/what teachers should know'
 'processes for children to tell'

A further theme identified in responses was the acquisition and use of resources with children and young people to help them understand the issues and this was linked to frequent references to incorporating DV into the PSHE programme. Several responses suggested the provision of leaflets and posters in school to signpost pupils to support. Other participants suggested providing activities for children and young people on themes related to DV, for example drama and role play.

The need for access to counselling for children and young people emerged as a theme, particularly in the secondary sector. Linked to this, there were also responses asking for training in counselling skills.

Many participants noted that what would be helpful would be more support from outside agencies and this was particularly evident in responses from the secondary sector. Other related suggestions included a helpline and an up-to-date list of helpful contacts.

Issues arising from evaluation forms and discussion with trainers

- The initial invitation by letter to schools to participate in the Domestic Violence training met with little response.
- Using the Educational Psychology Service link as a direct contact proved useful and facilitated schools to take up the training. Educational psychologists have a relationship of trust within schools. Where the educational psychologist was known to the school, they were more ready to take up the training and see the benefits of it.
- The system of communication between educational psychologists, schools and trainers could be streamlined.
- Feedback forms and comments from trainers highlighted the need for some changes in the course content to be more useful for schools. Course content needs to focus on addressing the following questions:
 - What can be observed by adults working in schools with regards to victims or perpetrators of domestic violence? How does domestic violence present at school?
 - What questions should staff be asking the adults and children involved?
 - What are the staff responsibilities and how do they tie into the school's Child Protection policy? What procedures should be followed, who should be contacted?
 - What possible referral routes and support agencies are there for those involved?
- An outline of a school policy on DV and action would be helpful for schools and needs to be consistent with Child Protection procedures. This could be part of more general Devon Guidelines for DV in schools.

- Issues arose about the sensitivity of the topic of DV and the need for there to be someone available after the sessions to counsel/talk to groups/individuals if particular issues had arisen.
- To consolidate the initial training, targeted individuals (e.g. SENCOs, PSHE coordinators) could be encouraged to take up further training on DV e.g. Level 1 training and training in the use of resources available to schools. This will need to be planned in the Summer Term so it becomes part of school's INSET/CPD programme for coming year.
- Although it is not yet possible to evaluate the Wolf and Water work in schools, it is clear that the initial timescale was not long enough to allow schools to incorporate this longer-term work into curriculum planning.

Conclusions

The DV training sessions have received positive feedback and appeared to have fulfilled the aim of increasing understanding of Domestic Violence and how prevalent it is. However, more work could be done to increase the skills of school staff and wider the community to deal with it when it happens, to know how to access the support available and how to empower people to be able to make a significant difference to those involved.

Summary of Recommendations

- Modification of training materials to reflect needs of school staff and time constraints.
- Extension of training to other learning communities.
- Follow-on training for staff from schools who have received awareness training to focus upon the use of resources and work on the practical skills and processes required in schools to support those experiencing DV.
- Develop a sample Devon school policy on Domestic Violence, tied in with Child Protection procedures.
- Develop Devon guidelines for Domestic Violence in schools. (Possible joint work between EPS, ADVA and Women's Aid, to be updated annually with contacts etc.)
- Provide support/supervision for people dealing with these sensitive issues in schools and in the wider community.
- An increased timescale between initial contact with schools and training or arts package delivery, to allow more effective planning.

- A more efficient system for setting up training sessions:
 - The educational psychologist to make initial contact with the school.
 - Details of interested schools to be passed on to trainer.
 - Trainer to contact the school directly to confirm dates, times, numbers and to offer leaflets/posters to advertise the course within school to the wider community.

**Claire Bedford and Angie Mudge
Educational Psychologists**

3.5.05

