Domestic abuse charity launches ground-breaking initiative to help teens break the cycle of abuse

Thursday 4 August, 2022

- *Recent statistics show scale of domestic abuse amongst teens: referrals of those 18 and under are up 73% (Cheshire East data), and one in seven (14%) of women aged 16 to 19 experienced domestic abuse in 2020-21 - 40% higher than the next age group [source: Crime Survey for England and Wales]*

- *My CWA and Police and Crime Commissioner for Cheshire, John Dwyer, collaborated to create new 'Reset' programme to educate teenagers on domestic abuse and its warning signs*

Cheshire, UK – Domestic abuse charity My CWA, has launched a brand-new programme called 'Reset' to educate teenagers on domestic abuse and its warning signs amid a rise in abuse amongst young people.

Young people are disproportionately affected by domestic abuse - whether at home or in their own relationships. According to the Crime Survey for England and Wales, one in seven (14%) of women aged 16 to 19 experienced some form of domestic abuse in the year 2020-21 - 40% higher than the next age group (age 20-24).

Across the communities My CWA (formerly Cheshire Without Abuse) supports, the Cheshire East Domestic Abuse Hub reports a staggering 73% increase (2020/21 – 2021/22) in referrals for teens aged 18 and below. Referrals to the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC) – a meeting between domestic abuse specialists, police, children's social services, health and other relevant agencies to discuss how to help victims at high risk of murder or serious harm - have increased from 16% to 18% for young people under 25 (from 20/21 to 21/22). Furthermore, in the year April 2021-Mar 22 there was a 10% increase in the number of domestic abuse incidents in Cheshire East recorded by the police where the victim was aged 13-17 compared to the previous year (April 2020 - March21).

Following the awarding of a national grant to 25 Police and Crime Commissioners in England and Wales for domestic abuse intervention programmes, My CWA and Police and Crime Commissioner for Cheshire, John Dwyer, collaborated to create the pioneering early intervention programme, 'Reset'. The programme will empower teens across Cheshire with knowledge of what makes a healthy and happy relationship – promoting self-identification of harmful behaviours and equipping them with the skills to make healthier relationship choices.

John Dwyer, Police and Crime Commissioner for Cheshire said: "I'm really pleased to be working with My CWA and to see 'Reset' already making a positive difference to people's lives.

"If we're going to break the cycle of domestic abuse then it's vital to reach young people and educate them at the age where they are beginning to explore relationships. If they can have these open discussions with their peers now and stamp out harmful behaviours, then it creates a safer environment for generations to come.

"Protecting vulnerable and at-risk people is key to my Police and Crime Plan, and people living in fear of domestic abuse and in coercive relationships are among the most vulnerable in society. Preventing it from ever taking place is crucial and that's why I'm so glad that My CWA is delivering this essential training for young people in Cheshire."

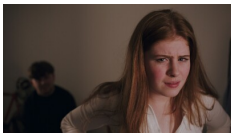
'Reset' encompasses twelve one-hour interactive sessions delivered by professionals working with young people and assesses attitudes, beliefs and perceptions about relationships and domestic abuse before and after participation. The interactive programme features group activities and opportunities for discussion throughout in order to give young people space to share their thoughts and feelings on various relationship-related topics.

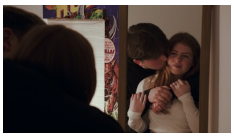
Included in the programme is 'The Wheel' – a short film produced and written with the help of people with lived experience of harmful relationships. 'The Wheel' follows the story of a teenage romantic

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relationship and has been edited into ‘bite-size’ sections for teenagers to discuss each portion; dissecting unhealthy relationships and allowing opportunities to spot and discuss red flags.

Saskia Lightburn-Ritchie, My CWA CEO adds: “Understanding what makes a relationship healthy or unhealthy – whether romantic, family or friendship - and having the knowledge to spot red flags of unhealthy behaviours, is essential for all young people. While many teens and young people realise there can more to abuse than physical injuries, there are still many widely accepted misconceptions about what healthy and unhealthy relationships look like. Reset was created to challenge misconceptions, and educate and empower young people to make healthier relationship choices; and ultimately avoid future domestic abuse incidents.

“Many perpetrators (75%) and victims (65%) have experienced domestic abuse in their early relationships and in their childhood family environment; and many participants of our perpetrator behaviour programmes have shared how much they wish they’d been taught healthier relationship behaviours in school. One perfectly summed up the need for action with his statement: ‘Time out is more useful than algebra. Why didn’t we learn that in school?’

Saskia continues: “By working closely with families affected by domestic abuse and listening to their thoughts on early intervention approaches, we’ve developed an innovative and pioneering new programme through ‘Reset’; targeting people at a younger age to maximize long-term impact. ‘Reset’ offers an early intervention approach to unlearn unhealthy behaviours before they become embedded and we’re very encouraged by the impact this is having amongst local teenagers in its pilot stage.”

The ‘Reset’ healthy relationships toolkit should be delivered by professionals working with young people. Visit ActonitNow.org.uk/Reset or call My CWA on 01270 250390 for more information.

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Notes to editors:

About My CWA

My CWA (formerly known as Cheshire Without Abuse) is a Cheshire-based charity supporting families affected by domestic abuse. From crisis accommodation, practical support and a 24-hour helpline, to counselling & recovery programmes; the charity’s whole family service is designed to help everyone impacted by domestic abuse. My CWA believes in building a community where adults and children live free from the fear of domestic abuse and, for over 40 years, the charity’s team of staff and volunteers has worked tirelessly towards this vision. For more information, visit www.mycwa.org.uk

About Act on it Now

Act on it Now is a website developed for young people, by young people. With sections for teens & young people, parents & carers and professionals, the site is packed with resources to help young people learn more about what healthy, unhealthy and toxic relationships might look like. Find out more here: www.actonitnow.org.uk

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