White Ribbon UK releases new learning resource to teach young people about gender equality

Monday 15 May, 2023

Building Gender Equality For Young People will help professionals speak to children and young people about gender norms and the potentially harmful realities of restrictive societal expectations for girls and boys.

This comprehensive learning resource was developed over a two-year period by expert practitioners to help adults working with children and young people introduce the concepts of gender and inequality in a way that is safe and meaningful.

An open-access resource, it complements existing Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) curriculum in the UK. *Building Gender Equality* focuses on the prevention of restrictive and harmful gender traits that lead to gender inequality, addressing a serious gap in school curriculum.

Dr Stephen Burrell, Researcher at Durham University, who is a leading researcher on masculinity in the UK and who played a key role in the development of this resource, said: “This is an important and valuable learning resource which I hope lots of schools will take up. If we’re going to prevent violence against women and girls from happening in the first place, then we’re going to need to get to the roots of the problem in the way that this resource does – looking at ongoing gender inequalities in our society and rigid, restrictive gender norms which stop us being our full selves, such as the idea that boys and men should always be tough, unemotional, powerful and in control.”

White Ribbon UK is dedicated to educating and upskilling all members of society to transform cultures and systems which perpetuate gender violence through negative portrayals of different genders. Education settings are vital for effective prevention work, to stop violence before it starts.

To achieve gender equality in our society, we must foster skills in young people which enable them to recognise inequality. By understanding how inequality can manifest, future generations will be able to make choices that lead to mutual respect and greater inclusivity.

Alice Kestell, Education Consultant, explains the importance of focusing on behavioural development and formalising how school settings help young people navigate their identities and interpersonal relationships.

She said: “This vital resource began as a set of key messages. These are the messages we wish to convey to primary and secondary school students to address the root causes of violence against women and girls.

“In the context of the RSHE curricula, they are differentiated according to age - younger students learn about respectful friendships and how stereotypes can harm us, and older students discover the consequences of considering anything 'feminine' as less worthy, and our responsibility to call out harmful behaviour.”

“The activities were created through a rigorous process of research existing content, consultation with gender equality experts, testing material with different age groups and incorporating their feedback to make the resource that exists today.”

This requires a community-wide approach to challenge harmful constructions of masculinity, and how negative masculine traits enable an environment that can lead to violence against women and girls. *Building Gender Equality* can guide schools, community groups and other youth-focused organisations who want to create healthier and safer communities.

Headteacher, **Anthony Guise**, of Calder High School, one of the schools where this resource was piloted, said: “‘With young people being exposed to increasingly high levels of widening and extreme views via social media and high-profile individuals, it is vital that schools provide safe opportunities for them to discuss and challenge existing and emerging views confidently.

“Through working with White Ribbon, I am proud to provide these opportunities across our school, helping them to become empowered to stand up for their rights and those of others in their communities. Thank you, White Ribbon UK, for supporting the next generation as they navigate their way through to

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adulthood.”

Building Gender Equality is available as an open-access resource on the White Ribbon UK website at: whiteribbon.org.uk/our-resources.

For more information about this learning resource, please contact info@whiteribbon.org.

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