



Young People and Domestic Violence  
Findings from a survey carried out by the Young  
Peoples Safety Project

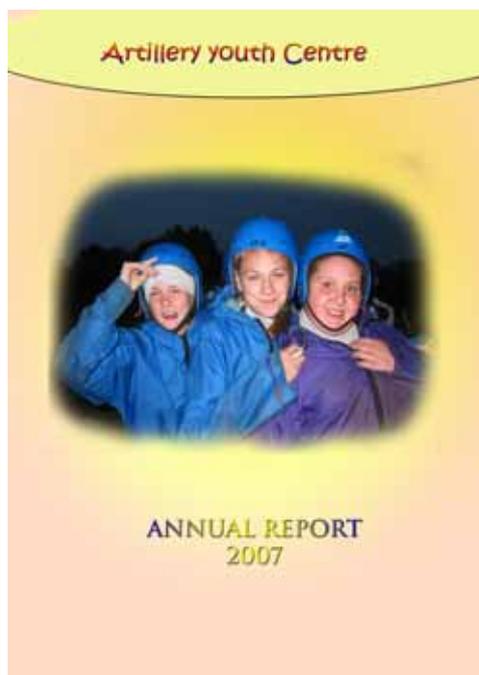
February 2008

## About Artillery

Artillery Youth Centre works with 15-25 year olds in the Greater New Lodge area of North Belfast. We were created by young people to deliver a range of services to young adults in the district and to empower young people to become decision makers in this community. We work with vulnerable young people, young parents, offenders, unemployed and at risk young people as well as young people in work or in full time education.

Our key aims are to work in partnership with young people to create a professional, imaginative and creative youth strategy for this community; and to deliver on that strategy a series of programmes and projects that will help young people be a more confident and proactive section of our population.

Artillery is managed by young people. Young people are at the very heart of the decision making processes of this organisation and in an area where young people make up more than 40% of the population and are essentially excluded from decision making, we see our project as providing an opportunity for young people to engage with the wider community as equals. We work to ensure that young peoples rights are recognised and that their needs are addressed.



Artillery provides youth services throughout the area. We operate a drop-in centre and cyber café seven days per week which is open to midnight most nights. We have established a youth credit union at Artillery which currently has over 60 members. We have a young people and violence project which delivers training to young people and a multimedia training project which produces a quarterly youth magazine and has a range of facilities including a DJ school and Video Production facility.

We manage the New Lodge Area Project which has four key themes - Poverty, Employment, Empowerment and Education; this includes a Youtbank, Easter Revision School, Jobs Fairs, Youth Forum, Youth Information Project which operates a mobile phone network.

We also manage the Young Parents Project which works with young mothers and fathers in the district to combat isolation. The project delivers education and training as well as social

opportunities for parents and their children. The project also operates a baby sitting service and provides practical support, advice and advocacy.

Artillery has traditionally been very strong on consultation, participation and empowerment of young people. The project was started by a group of young people who wanted to take control of a building from which to deliver a youth project to young adults. The ethos that has grown up around the project is very much about young people being at the very core of decision making.

**HAVE YOUR SAY !**



TAKE PART IN A CONFERENCE ON ISSUES  
AFFECTING YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE NEW  
LODGE AND NEWINGTON !

**TALK ABOUT CHANGE FOR YOUR AREA**  
TAKE PART IN WORKSHOPS ON P.J. SKILLS,  
DRUMS AND GRAFFITI ART.  
WIN PRIZES LIKE DVD PLAYERS AND MP3  
PLAYERS...

**FRIDAY 15TH OCTOBER**  
CONTACT  
NEW LODGE AREA PROJECT  
NEWINGTON RESIDENTS OR ARTILLERY  
**REGISTER NOW !**

What the project is now is a series of user groups and management structures feeding into the Steering Group. There is a Young Parents Advocacy Group, the Greater New Lodge Youth Forum, the Debt Management Group and the Steering Group itself. All these bodies are elected young people. We run seminars and day conferences on issues affecting young people in this area. The findings from these directly impact upon the direction of our services and policies. We have instigated a youth jury system where young people can question those in authority and come to an informed policy decision as a result.

At the same time we monitor and evaluate even the smallest project or piece of work as a matter of course so that we can better target services and also to ensure that every young person has an opportunity to have their say.

## About the Young Peoples Safety Project

Over the past two years we have delivered an education and personal development programme to young people in the area to provide alternatives to engagement in violence. We initially set the programme up to address inter-community violence and rioting but over time the most pressing issue around violence for young people was not sectarian violence but casual and domestic violence.

Initially we worked only with young men but found that there was a demand for the programme from young women who were not only victims but prepatrators of violence. Our most recent research surveyed 135 young women in our local on their experiences of violence and community safety found is being published by the Institute of Conflict Research (copy enclosed) found that 31% had been injured as a result of violence with 10% requiring hospitalisation. In a recent survey with young men we found that 1 in 4 had experience of domestic violence and more than half felt that it was acceptable in hit women.



We want to deliver a programme aimed at addressing domestic violence and its effects on young people. The programme will include the design of a training pack that can be used by other groups working with young people which will be delivered over three years to groups and will be published on a website. The training programme will include looking at relationships, alternatives to violence and causes and effects. It will be practical as well as issue based - we have included first aid training in previous programmes. We want to develop a peer education model as part of this process.

As well as this we want to establish networks with agencies and groups who will have a role to play in tackling this issue including social services, health trusts, victim support, women's aid and youth providers. We will produce posters, video and other resources aimed at publicising this issue and work towards the establishment of anti violence policies across the community.

This project has been developed in response to a need identified through the delivery of workshops and training programmes with young people over the past two years. Addressing issues of violence has been a central tenet of our work; and violence and the threat of violence has been constant feature of the lives of most of the young people we work with. In developing this project we have included young people in its design and we have consistently involved users in evaluation and development.

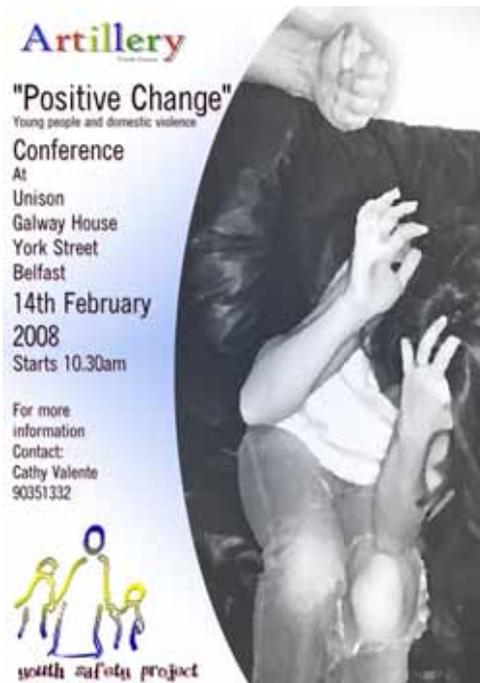
We want to break the cycle of participation in violence by young people who have experience of domestic violence and to give young people the opportunity to learn alternative ways of dealing with conflict and anger.

At the same time we want to highlight the issue of domestic violence and the effects it has on young people through awareness campaigns and to establish support networks with relevant agencies and to make young people aware of them. Through this we hope to de-stigmatise this issue and produce a change in how it is talked about in this community.

We will also produce a training guide for other groups and provide the resources to them through the internet so that others can address this issue in a youth work setting. Our aim for this project is to have an impact on policy and curriculum beyond our own immediate district.

We will help young people to develop skills to cope with conflict and the understanding to engage in relationships that are healthy and free of violence or the fear of violence.

We will involve young people in this project at every step, from evaluation to delivery and from peer education initiatives to design of awareness campaigns, publicity materials and contact with statutory agencies



## **Domestic Violence and Young People**

We decided to address the issue of domestic violence mainly because it kept coming up as an issue for young people through our work with them. Our Young Peoples Safety Project worked with young adults initially addressing interface violence and at first focusing on work with young men in particular. But as we worked through issues with young adults, two key themes emerged - casual street level violence of a mainly non-sectarian nature and violence in the home.

Through our work, we were aware of some of the issues but felt it important to talk to young people and to undertake a piece of research or consultation that could lead to an action plan that had young people involved centrally in its design. This is where the idea for this survey came from. We set out to find out what young people knew about the issues around domestic violence, how they felt it affected them and their peers and what they thought were ways to address the issue with young people in this area.

We surveyed 154 young people under the age of 30. They were young people still at school and those in employment; young people living with their parents and those with young families of their own; young people in relationships, some married; street based young people, both male and female.

Young people were invited to complete the questionnaire and to optionally supply their contact details for further contact. Of those who completed the questionnaire 91 of 154 chose not to supply their contact details, which for us demonstrated some of the sensitivity and stigma around the issue of domestic violence in communities like the New Lodge.

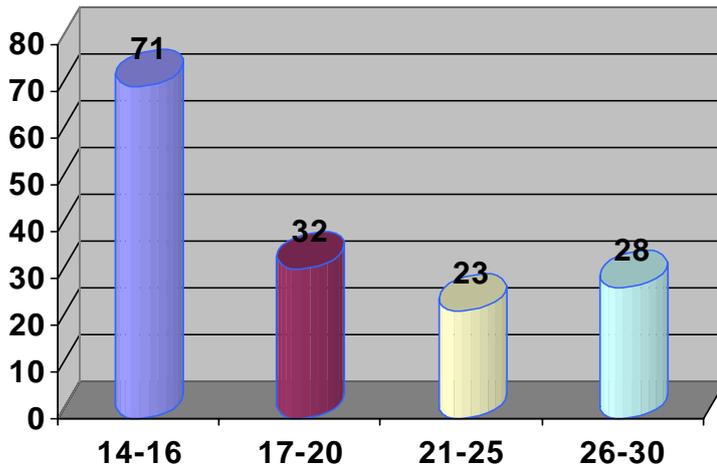
There are some surprising findings from the survey and we have tried in this report to lay out the findings clearly and concisely. In completing this research we are indebted to Comic Relief who fund this project through their UK Grants programme and to the Greater New Lodge CEP and the New Lodge Area Project who supported the conference for young people to discuss the findings of the survey at Galway House.

**Cathy Valente**

Young Peoples Safety Project  
Artillery Youth Centre  
February 2008

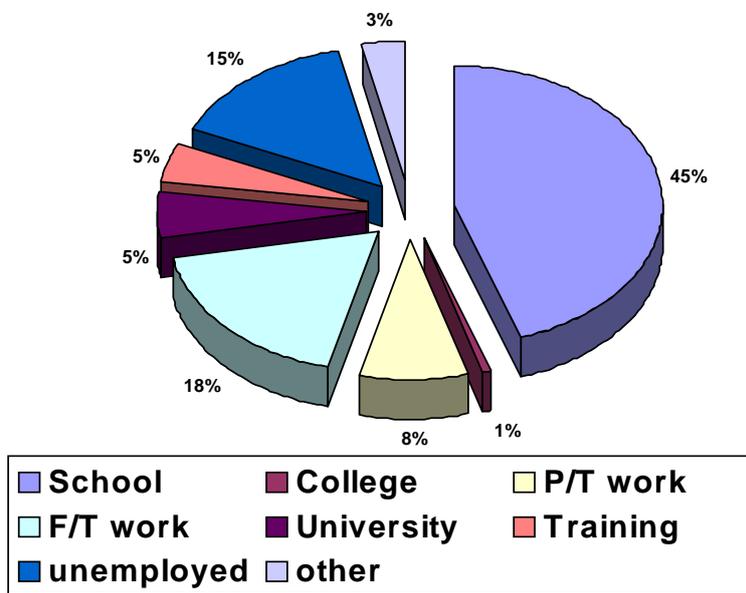


Table 1: Age breakdown of those who answered the questionnaire



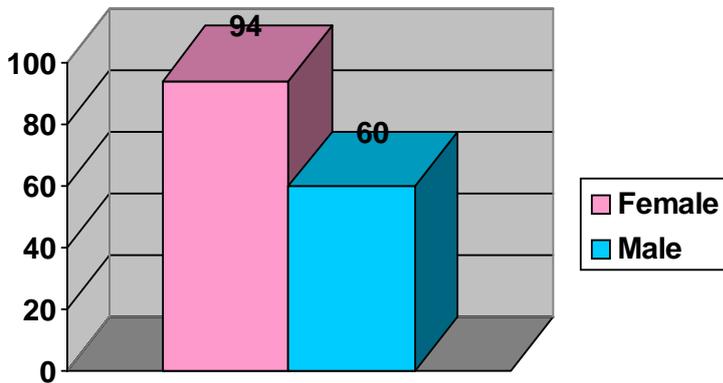
**Table 1:** In total 154 people responded to the questionnaire. The above graph breaks down the respondents by age. The largest group of respondents 46% were in the 14-16 age group, which reflects the age profile of young adults using the drop in centre at Artillery. Much of the remainder of respondents were targeted through outreach and those involved with specialist groups and programmes associated with Artillery and the New Lodge Area Project such as the Young Parents Project.

Table 2: Status of respondents



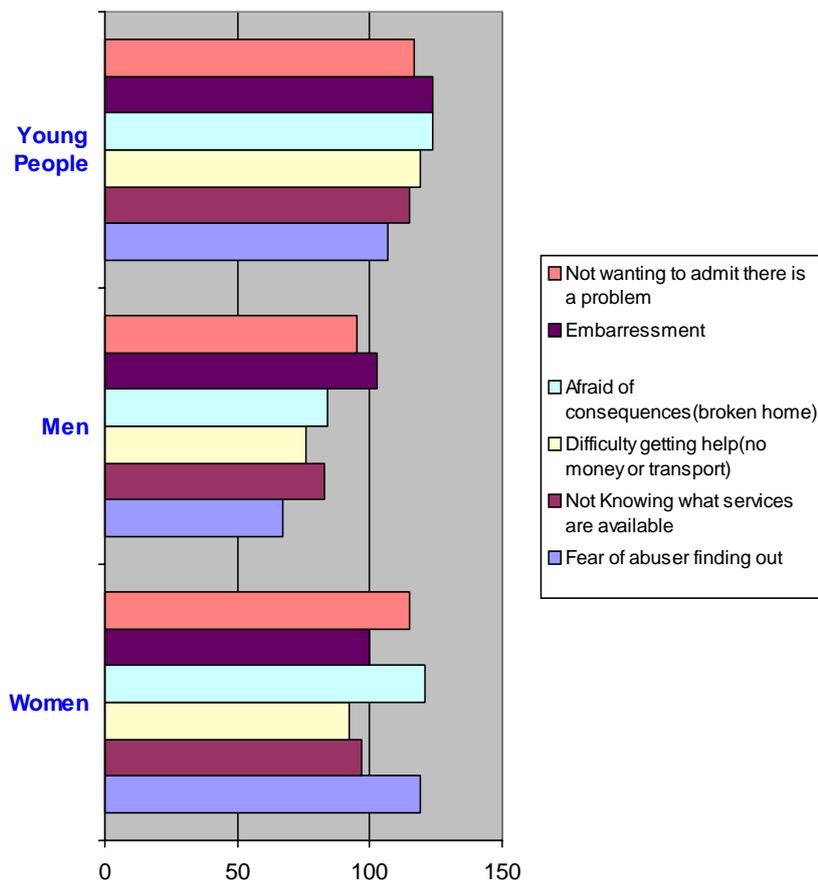
**Table 2:** 51% of all respondents are currently studying, either at school, college or university. This is reflective of the age group that participated in the questionnaire, 67% of which are 20 years of age or under. This reflects very much the profile of young people currently using services at Artillery Youth Centre (which caters for the 15-25 age group. It is fair to say that the majority of young people using drop in facilities and participating in training programmes are in the 15-19 age range.) In total 41% of respondents were either working in part or full time jobs or were unemployed.

Table 3: Respondents by Male/Female Breakdown



**Table 3:** This graph reflects the gender breakdown of participants taking part in the questionnaire. 61% female and 39% male, this is possibly due to a number of reasons. It could be that more young women participated because of the profile of the staff and volunteers who carried out the research – they were all female. Also, whilst there was no real reluctance on the part of young men to take part in the survey, young women were more enthusiastic about participation. That the issue of domestic violence is wrongly seen as a Woman’s issue may have had some significance in the imbalance of male/female participation. Lastly a key factor was time. We wanted to complete the survey within a 3-week timeframe to allow us a snapshot of attitudes, knowledge and opinions within a defined period.

Table 4: What would prevent victims of domestic violence from seeking help? (Tick all that apply)



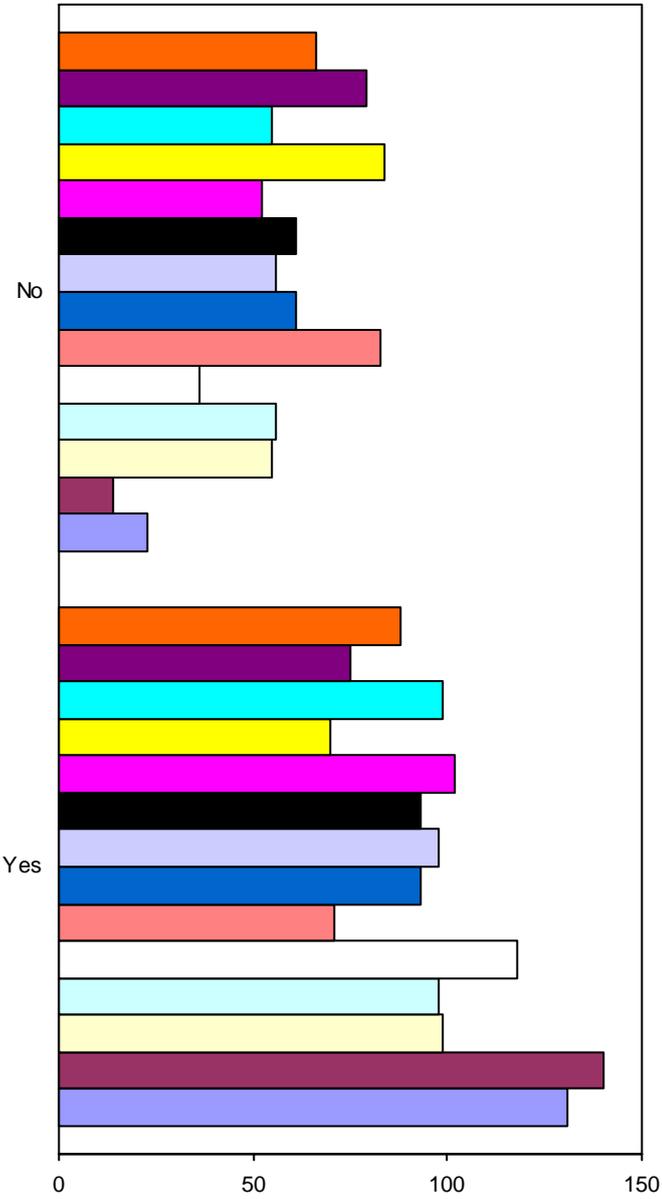
**Table 4:** When asked what would prevent young people who are victims of domestic violence from seeking help, it was interesting that all 6 statements scored high, whereas the results of what young people felt would prevent women/men in the same circumstances, the results tended to be staggered.

Young people who responded felt that embarrassment and fear of the consequences were the two main reasons for young people not seeking help. With regards to the statements listing difficulty in getting help (no money/transport) and not knowing of what services are available, respondents felt that these barriers would prove more difficult for young people.

In response to why young people felt, women in a similar situation would not seek help, the main reasons highlighted were fear of abuser, fear of the consequences and not wanting to admit there is a problem. The remaining 3 statements were also strongly recognised.

- Your boyfriend telling you what to wear and what not to
- A parent who spends all their wages in bingo or the bookies
- Your partner making decisions for you
- A girl who is constantly giving her boyfriend money
- A woman who is not allowed to go out to work
- A young person whose parents constantly shouts at them
- When your partner tells you you are stupid
- When a boyfriend is constantly slagging you in front of other people
- When a partner turns an argument around to blame the other person
- A young person who does not want to go home because their parents are fighting
- A person not being allowed to visit their family because of their partner
- A parent slapping their child
- A man kicking a woman
- A man Slapping a woman

**Table 5: What constitutes domestic violence?**

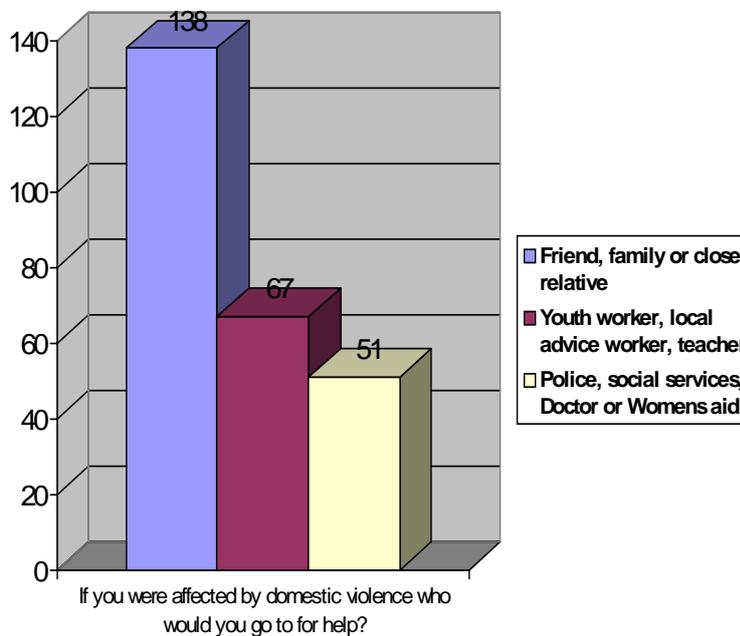


**Table 5:** The overwhelming majority of respondents felt that, whether a woman slapping a man or a man kicking a woman, these are forms of domestic violence. This suggests that the respondents seen a clear link between physical violence and domestic violence.

The statement “a young person who doesn’t want to go home because of their parents fighting” received the third highest proportion of the scores. This is possibly representative of the age of respondents completing the questionnaire, as just over 71% of respondents reside at home with parents.

Many other statements, which would fall under the term “emotional/mental harm,” received high scores. These figures are reassuring as the majority of young people involved understand that these forms of behaviour are unacceptable and should not exist within positive relationships.

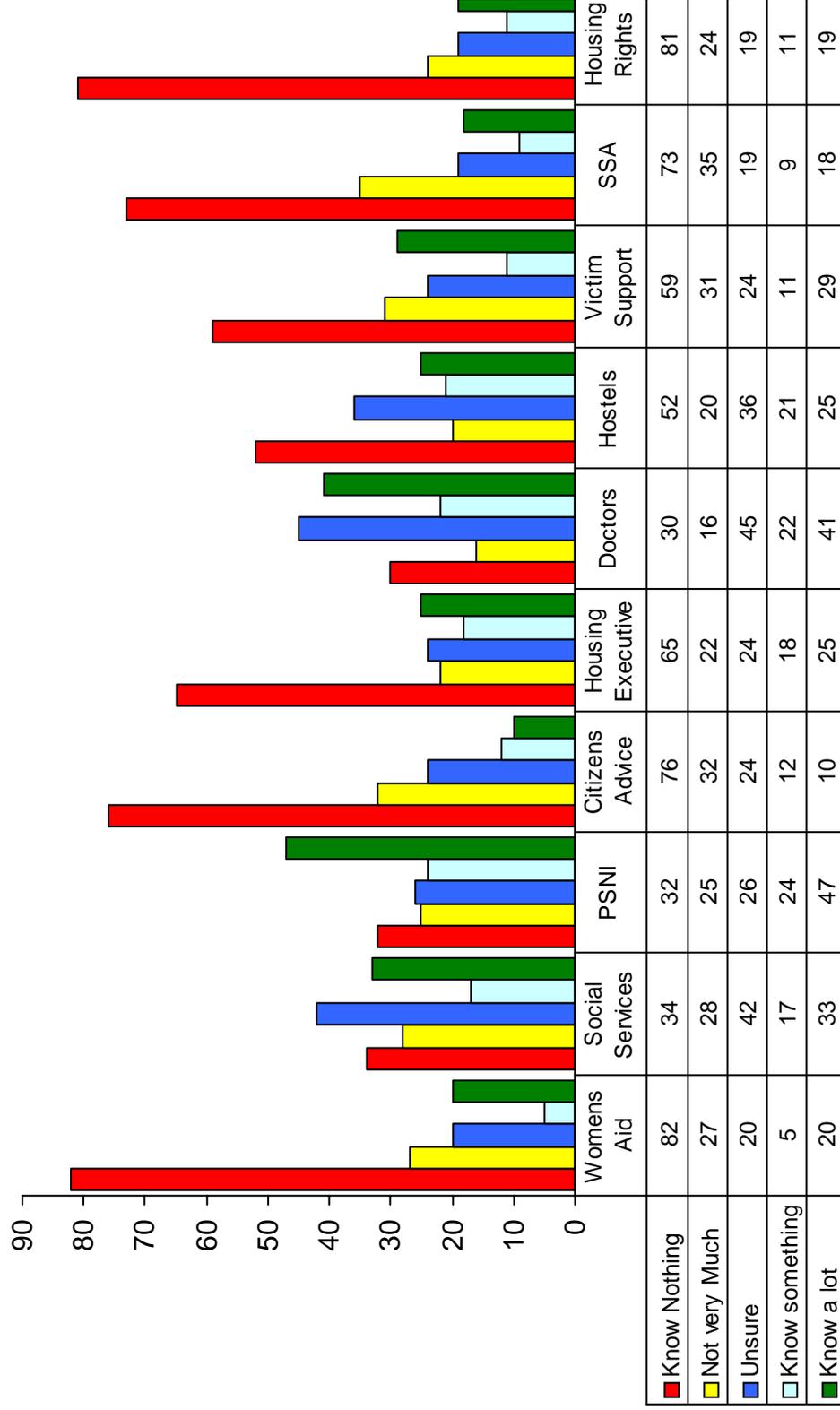
Table 6: Young people were asked who they would go for help and could tick all that applied to them



**Table 6:** More than half of all respondents stated that they would confide in a friend, family or close relative if they were affected by domestic violence. This could be indicative of the relative lack of knowledge young people have of statutory services. It might also reflect the age profile and how young people see this as an issue to keep away from authority and perhaps a certain unease about dealing with difficult situations in a formal manner.

The importance of educationalists – teachers and youth workers is evident as the next likely source of support for young people. Given the responses to subsequent questions, around the nature of services and young peoples apparent lack of awareness of the role of statutory providers and voluntary agencies, it is not surprising that these agencies featured less significantly in young peoples’ answers.

Table 7: Knowledge of Services



Total number surveyed 154 young people

### **Table 7: Knowledge of Services**

What is evident from the findings of this survey is that there is, at best, a sporadic knowledge amongst young adults of what services are available to them. Organisations who provide frontline services such as Women's Aid and the Social Security Agency scored surprisingly low in terms of recognition or awareness of the services they provide. 71% of respondents knew little or nothing about Women's Aid and the services they provided.

Few organisations scored highly in terms of recognition or awareness of the services they provided to those at risk or experiencing domestic violence. 33% of respondents knew a lot about Childline and the services they provided. At the same time 30% of young adults were aware of the role played by the PSNI.

Overall, there was a very obvious lack of knowledge about the services available for people suffering from issues around domestic violence. 35% of young people knew nothing about the services available. 16% of young people knew little. 18% of young people admitted to being unsure of services available. 11% of respondents knew something about the organisations and the services they provided. Overall, only 20% or one in five young people knew a lot about the services available to those suffering from domestic violence.

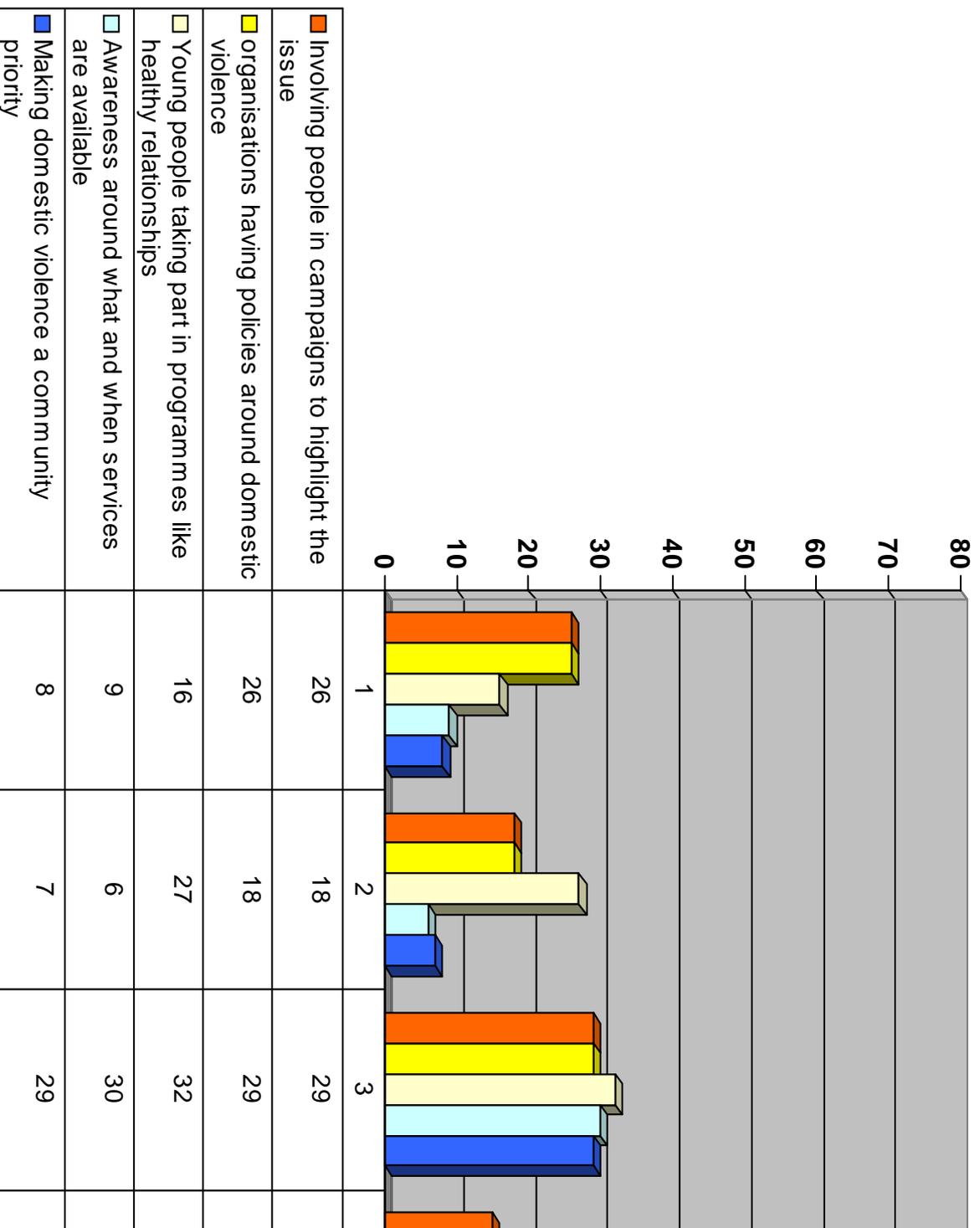
### **Table 8: Tackling Domestic Violence**

In this table (which denotes usefulness with a score of 5 and not useful as all with a score of 1) it is clear that young people see making domestic violence a community priority as the most useful course of action. What is uncertain is what this means in practice or whether young people had thought through what making a priority was. We could presume that placing the issue high on the agenda for the delivery of services, training and awareness was what is meant here. There was significant support for awareness raising and giving young people information about what services were available.

In a similar vein was the support for training programmes such as healthy relationships and quite a number of respondents thought that organisations having policies around domestic violence and that involving people in campaigns were a good idea. That said there was more ambivalence around these last two issues – this could be down to the nature of the survey which might be reflected in the unsure/don't know answers (3).

On balance there is support for a greater emphasis on the issue within the community and a desire for clarity about resources, services and availability of help for those experiencing or at risk of domestic violence.

Table 8: How would rate the following in their usefulness in tackling domestic violence



## Conclusions

This survey reached out to 154 young people over the age of 14 and under the age of 30. Indeed the vast majority of respondents were under the age of 25. We feel that we reached a fair cross section of young people in the Greater New Lodge and in this respect we feel that the findings are a representative survey of young people's views and experiences of this issue.

There are a number of conclusions we can extract from this survey. They are as follows:

1. Young Adults in this community, whilst aware of the physical aspects of domestic violence, seem less certain about the physiological impact or indeed what constitutes "violence." There would seem to be a case for education and training around this issue backed up by the views of young people themselves who thought that more training around programmes such as healthy relationships was a good idea. (See table 8)
2. More needs to be done to make young adults aware of the range of services and service providers available to those at risk of or experiencing domestic violence. Clearly there is a wide gap in knowledge of what organisations do, what their responsibilities are and who are the contacts. Organisations such as Women's Aid, Housing Rights Service and Citizens Advice would seem to have a very high profile and indeed provide a lot of front line essential services but too many young people just did not know what they did. The inescapable conclusion is that more needs to be done to not only publicise the work of relevant agencies but to join up and coordinate their response.
3. Young adults consider domestic violence to be a priority issue. There would appear to be support for integrating a community response through changing policies. Procedures and practices within community groups. At the same time there exists a sense of the issue not being afforded sufficient weight when it comes to a community response to its impact. That almost 60% of respondents to the survey chose not to volunteer their contact details says much about the existing taboos and sensitivities that surround this issue within the community.
4. Young people participated in this consultation willingly and enthusiastically. They want to be consulted on issues that affect their lives and the life of the wider community. This research reinforces our deeply held belief that young people should be involved in the debate about services and quality assuring what is being delivered to this community.
5. More needs to be done to clarify who does what and who has responsibility for delivering services. Maybe this means there is a case for more resources, maybe not. It might be about using existing resources in a smarter way and communicating and engaging effectively with both young people and the wider community.

6. We should conclude that the findings of this research are measured and reflective. They should be looked at dispassionately and a coherent response drawn up that involves young people, professionals and local people. Our intention with was to neither sensationalise nor draw a veil over the issue. We want young people to see themselves not as victims but as agents for change.

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