

Steps Evaluation Report

Executive Summary

The Steps gender-based violence (GBV) programme was initially developed by Salford Foundation in response to concerns raised by young people during its delivery social action projects in Salford during 2021/22.

Young people identified emerging issues including toxic masculinity, misogyny, and exposure to online pornography. In response, Salford Foundation's "Life Ready" team worked with schools and engaged young people to co-design initiatives on themes such as Risky Behaviours, Online Harms, and Positive Masculinity.

Innovation

These innovative, youth-led programmes reached 800 young people between 2021 and 2024. Insights and learning from the social action projects helped to shape and inform the development of the Steps education curriculum, which was co-developed with education partners and the GMCA Violence Reduction Unit (VRU).

The Steps programme was implemented across Greater Manchester targeting boys aged 9 to 13. It aimed to tackle risk factors linked to GBV, including harmful gender norms; promote understanding of healthy relationships, boundaries, and consent; empower boys to become positive role models; and equip schools to foster safer environments.

Interventions

Key interventions were delivered by Salford Foundation staff during 6 weekly sessions to boys as part of their Personal Social Health Education curriculum including:

- 1. Gender Stereotypes, Internalisation, and Misogyny**
- 2. Supporting those affected by Online Misogyny**
- 3. Our Online Diet and Our Safety Online**
- 4. Algorithms and Social Media**
- 5. Healthy Relationships and being an Active Bystander**
- 6. Final mop up session and reflections**

Evaluation

This summary report summarises the findings from the external evaluation of Steps, conducted by Cordis Bright. A total of 745 pupils received support across 8 schools in Greater Manchester. 599 impact questionnaires were completed and analysed. Overall, 81% of boys rated the sessions as good or excellent.

Between May 2024 and April 2025, Steps reached 745 boys in eight schools across Greater Manchester. Participants included boys from diverse ethnic backgrounds and across Years 5-8, including those from deprived areas and with special educational needs.

Evidence of impact for boys

High proportions of boys reported improvement in their understanding and ability to respond to misogyny thanks to Steps. Boys reported positive changes thanks to Steps in three key ways:

- **Improved boys' understanding of their own behaviour**
- **Improved the attitudes and behaviour of their classmates**
- **Improved the school environment around attitudes and behaviour**

Feedback showed positive changes in the areas of overall wellbeing and behaviour, recognising and understanding misogyny, and actively responding to misogyny. For example:

In the area of being respectful and not making jokes about women & girls; and knowing when the media is sending a bad message about women & girls.

As a result of Steps

- More than 63% of boys agreed they had improved
- 46-53% of boys agreed their classmates had improved
- About 36% of boys reported negative gender-based behaviour was happening less at school

Boys and school staff rate Steps highly

The programme was well-received by both pupils and school staff: **81%** of boys rated sessions as **Good or Excellent**. **64–77%** found topics **Interesting or Very interesting**. **89%** felt it was **Important or Very** important that others receive similar support.

Staff highlighted the programme's value in addressing complex issues they often felt under-equipped to handle.

Conclusion

Steps is a promising, well-received intervention with evidence of positive impact. Continued development and support for schools to continue to reinforce its learning could enhance its long-term influence on reducing GBV.