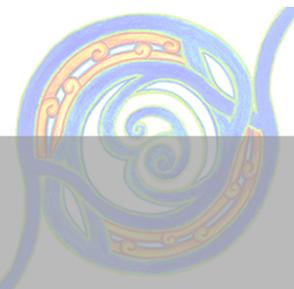# Preventing adolescent relationship abuse and promoting healthy relationships

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Key Messages

- Violence and abuse in adolescent relationships are serious problems in New Zealand and internationally. These issues do not receive the same level of attention as violence in adult relationships. Adolescence is a key time to intervene and to support young people to build healthy relationship skills.

- Psychological and emotional abuse are the most common forms of violence. These are sometimes left out of intervention and prevention programmes. More focus on issues of power and control, including emotional and psychological abuse are warranted.

- Gender transformative approaches that challenge dominant gender norms are key to successful prevention programmes.

- International evidence about successful and unsuccessful programmes is available and should be used to guide development and implementation of prevention and intervention strategies. Indigenous programmes also need to be developed that are grounded in Te Ao Māori.

- Intervention and prevention programmes must be developed in collaboration with members of communities within which the programmes are implemented, including ethnic minority and LGBTIQ communities. Successful programmes engage with community members and understand their needs and perspectives.

- Well-trained and skilled facilitators are just as important as programme content. Strong and knowledgeable facilitators are needed to be able to work from an evidence-base, and still tailor the work they do to the different groups they work with. Workforce capacity building is needed to grow and support more people to develop these skills.

- School-based curricula are important, but it is also important to think more broadly about developing community-based programmes.

Recommended citation

Acknowledgements

1.   Introduction

Adolescence is a key time when many young people begin to experience romantic and sexual relationships.[1] For some of these young people this time in their life will also include some form of violence and/or abuse in their early relationships, yet most intervention and prevention programmes target adults. Better understanding of adolescent relationship violence and abuse (ARVA) with a focus on building healthy relationships is needed to better support young people as they enter adulthood.

Norms around romantic and sexual relationships can vary widely for adolescents. Some families have strong rules forbidding romantic relationships during this time while others encourage young people to explore them.[2,3] Restrictions on romantic relationships are at times related to cultural or religious values and norms about how relationships are usually developed.[3,4] Additionally, not all students are heterosexually attracted. Around 9% of New Zealand secondary school students said they were attracted to people of the same-sex, or unsure of their sexual attraction[5] and up 3% identified as transgender or unsure of their gender identity. Considering the wide range of experiences and desires, it is important then, that there is recognition of this range of contexts when engaging with adolescents about issues related to relationships.

Terminology used in this area varies. In much of the United States literature, 'teen dating violence' is used. However 'dating' as a practice where two people go out on 'dates' to get to know each other is not very relevant to adolescents in Aotearoa New Zealand. Instead young people may spend time in small groups, sometimes at parties, where some of them will pair off. This pairing-off may be for just one night or it might be within a longer relationship. Relationships may be fleeting or lasting and can consist mostly of text-based interactions and/or spending time together. This variation in relationship building can be overwhelming for young people who are witnessing and experiencing a range of norms. It is particularly challenging considering that adolescence can be a time period marked with exaggerated gender roles, and an acceptance of mythical notions of romance.[6] It also presents challenges to those working with adolescents to ensure that programmes and services are relatable to the adolescents it was designed for. For the purposes of this paper, the term adolescent relationship violence and abuse is used because the focus is about the romantic and sexual relationships that young people engage in and to distinguish these relationships from friendships or familial relationships. (Note that at times the language of literature cited is used.) Young people themselves are more likely to use a wide range of informal language such as "hooked up" or "hanging out."[7] In addition, the terms 'young people', 'youth' and 'adolescents' are applied to different age groups in different contexts, for example up to age 18 or up to age 25. This paper broadly focuses on ages 13-19, however some studies referenced focus on particular age ranges within this, or age ranges slightly outside it.

To understand the dynamics related to ARVA, this paper uses an ecological model to organise how individual, family, school, community and social factors contribute to ARVA. A key point to understanding ARVA is appreciating how gendered norms influence how young people of all genders
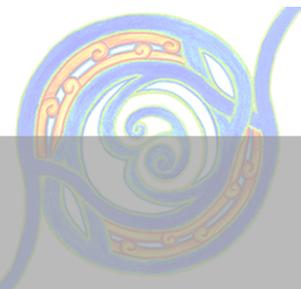
see themselves, and in turn how that can contribute to violent behaviour. This paper is based on a review of the New Zealand and international literature, and speaking to people working to prevent ARVA in the community. The conversations were held to relate the themes from the literature to the New Zealand policy and practice context. This paper will connect theoretical understandings of ARVA with practical information to further support young people's healthy and respectful relationships.
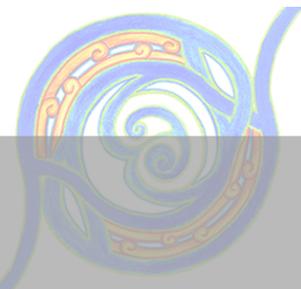
In general, rates of intimate partner violence are high in New Zealand. Just over half of New Zealand women have experienced at least one form of emotional or psychological abuse from a partner with one third of ever-partnered women reporting physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence.[8] In the Youth '12 survey, 20% of female and 9% of male secondary school students reported experiencing unwanted sexual touching in the previous 12 months.[1]

Considering that many relationship beliefs and behaviours are developed during adolescence[9–11] it is an important time to engage in both prevention and intervention efforts.[9] As with other forms of intimate partner violence, adolescent relationship abuse can include physical, sexual, psychological, and emotional forms of violence. When dealing with abuse from a partner, emphasis in law, policy and response often focuses only on physical and sexual forms of violence.[12] Research demonstrates that patterns of coercive control can be most damaging to victims.[12] Coercive control "is a pattern of domination by which abusive partners primarily interweave repeated physical and sexual violence with intimidation, sexual degradation, isolation and control" (p.7).[12]

ARVA also consists of these patterns of coercive control. Adolescent girls in New Zealand have described ownership behaviours by their male partners consistent with the concept of coercive control.[13] Ownership behaviours included constant phones calls to find out where their partner is, showing up wherever their partner is, touching the girl in public constantly to tell others that she is with him, and trying to control what they wear. Increasingly violence is perpetrated in online environments in additional to the 'real world'. Online forms of abuse can include forms of cyber-bullying and non-consensual sharing of images. At times this also includes the sharing of recordings of "real-life" violence.[14–16] This can have additional harmful results as the victim re-lives their victimisation online.

2.   Prevalence rates

Internationally, rates of ARVA can vary widely with reported victimisation rates between 9 and 60% of adolescents[17–20] and perpetration rates between 15 and 40%.[21] Rates vary based on whether or not psychological and emotional abuse were included, the nature of the sample, and methodology.[22] In one study of high school students in the United States 15% of females and 4.4% of males reported experiencing sexual violence from a dating partner and 15% of females and 8% of males reported having experienced physical violence.[20] Rates of perpetration are more difficult to identify. In one American study, 34% of intermediate school students reported perpetrating some form of psychological abuse, while 12% reported perpetrating moderate levels of physical abuse.[19] The same longitudinal study reported increasing levels of psychological abuse from age 13 to 19. Rates of perpetration of physical violence increased until about age 17, then began to decrease.[23]

Compared with other New Zealanders, adolescents between the ages of 15 and 19 have the highest rates of intimate partner violence according to the New Zealand Crime and Safety Survey.[24] According to the Youth 2012[25] study 29% of this age group reported being hit or harmed by another person in the previous year.[5] Fifteen percent of young people aged 12 to 18 (20% of females, 9% of males) reported having experienced unwanted sexual behaviour in the previous year.[5] The majority of incidents reported were perpetrated by a boyfriend, girlfriend or friend.[26] Twenty-one percent of women who stayed in women's refuges were aged 15-19 years.[27]

3.   Risk and protective factors

Intimate partner violence is perpetrated by and against people from all communities, ethnic groups and socio-economic backgrounds, however marginalised groups are at higher risk.[8,28] When identifying risk and protective factors related to ARVA it is important to consider contributing factors across individual, family, school, community and society levels that influence dating norms and behaviours including rates of violence.[29] See Figure 1 for a description of factors associated with ARVA.
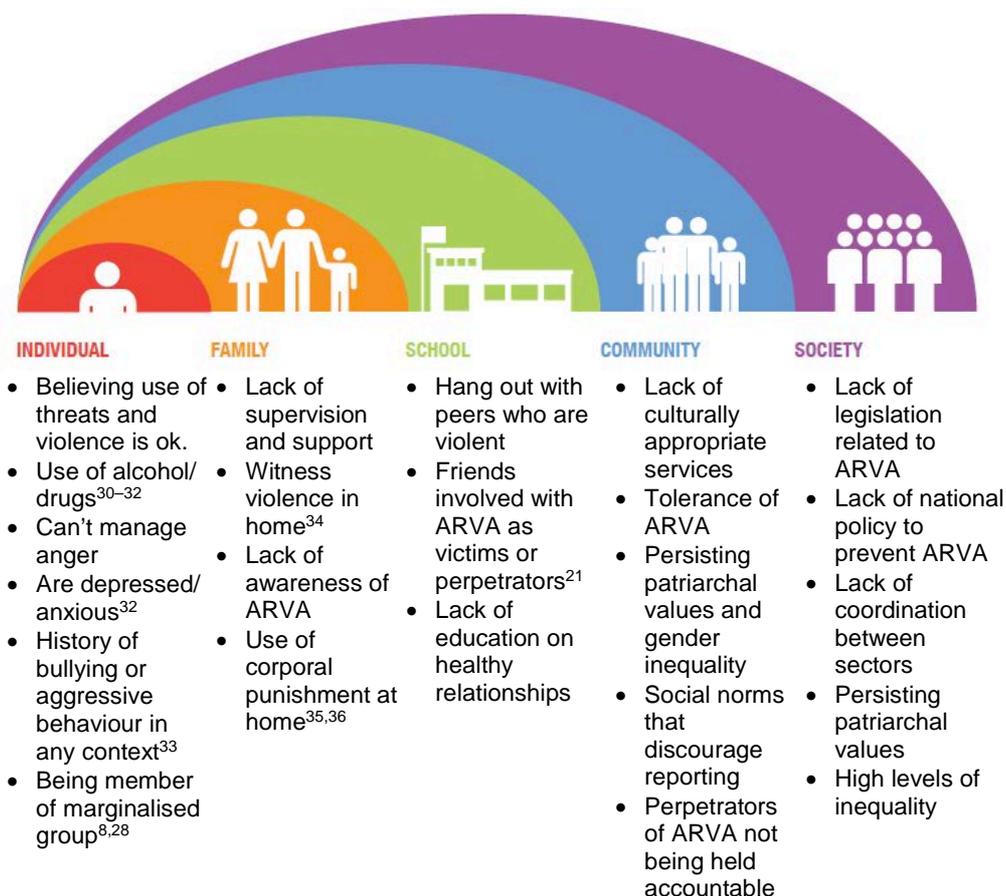

INDIVIDUAL	FAMILY	SCHOOL	COMMUNITY	SOCIETY
• Believing use of threats and violence is ok. • Use of alcohol/ drugs[30–32] • Can't manage anger • Are depressed/ anxious[32] • History of bullying or aggressive behaviour in any context[33] • Being member of marginalised group[8,28]	• Lack of supervision and support • Witness violence in home[34] • Lack of awareness of ARVA • Use of corporal punishment at home[35,36]	• Hang out with peers who are violent • Friends involved with ARVA as victims or perpetrators[21] • Lack of education on healthy relationships	• Lack of culturally appropriate services • Tolerance of ARVA • Persisting patriarchal values and gender inequality • Social norms that discourage reporting • Perpetrators of ARVA not being held accountable	• Lack of legislation related to ARVA • Lack of national policy to prevent ARVA • Lack of coordination between sectors • Persisting patriarchal values • High levels of inequality

Figure 1: Model of risk factors for victimisation and/or perpetration of ARVA
Adapted from UNESCO 2016 report: Global Guidance[29] and the CDC's guide to informing policy on dating violence[37] (CC BY NC SA 3.0 IGO).

Figure 1 represents an ecological model of the risk factors associated with ARVA. Moving beyond individual characteristics they highlight how peer and community relationships also impact the perpetration of ARVA.[38] For instance, in the model above we can see how family dynamics such as the use of physical punishment as well as community norms and beliefs can help shape the levels of violence in a community. Once we recognise that ARVA is an issue that goes well beyond the individuals involved we can begin to implement strategies that address all risk and protective factors.

Key to an ecological approach is the range of relationships in the lives of young people. There has been increasing concern over how technology is impacting young people and their relationships, particularly social media and online pornography. Pornography is a growing concern considering the ease of access to free porn.[39] At the same time it is important to remember that social media technologies and pornography are part of the wider social systems of young people. They reflect existing social norms. In other words, preventing access to pornography and/or social media will not solve the problem of ARVA. Instead we need to change problematic social norms around gender, relationships and sexuality.

Less research has been conducted looking at protective factors related to ARVA. Strong social connections with family, whānau and the broader community can act as protective factors.[40] Individual level protective factors include believing adolescent relationship abuse is wrong, empathy, and good grades.[41] Positive familial relationships, particularly with mothers, and strong school attachment were also protective factors against perpetration.[41]

4.   Key Concepts

Using a gendered lens

People of all genders can experience ARVA. Irrespective of the gender of individuals involved, Western gender norms and structural gender inequities play a large role in the way that ARVA happens. For instance, boys are taught to be tough, strong and in control. They are taught that they should want sex and it's their job to initiate and 'get' it. New Zealand adolescent boys report the expectation that they should put "bros before hos… effectively killing any equal relationship" (p. 9).[42]

Girls are taught to be polite and to be nurturers by looking after the feelings of others. For girls, being sexual comes with risks to their reputation. They are cautioned that being "too sexual" is a risk for them because boys cannot control themselves. These sets of beliefs are problematic for people of all genders and contribute to ARVA.[43,44]

When girls experience ARVA they are often blamed for the experience, being accused of having "asked for it", while boys' behaviour is often excused or minimised. This was visible in the recent media coverage of comments on a Facebook page where a couple of male students from Wellington College wrote comments about raping women. While the principal did not defend the comments, the boys were described as "good kids" who just did not realise it was not appropriate to say such
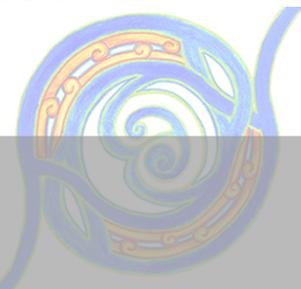
things[45] and the comments were excused on the basis that it was a simple mistake unconnected to broader cultural issues.[46] Comments such as these draw on commonly accepted notions of what it means to be a male in the dominant culture and are then used by others to minimise and excuse abusive behaviour. When boys experience ARVA they are often not believed because it is assumed they would be able to defend themselves, or that (in the case of sexual assault) that they wanted it. In other words, similar norms about masculinity are responsible for both excusing abusive behaviour in adolescent boys and blaming them for their own experiences of ARVA.[47]

When looking at how gendered norms contribute to ARVA, it becomes clear that in order to fully address ARVA we need to address the underlying gender norms that shape the way this violence is understood and allow for the continued perpetration of such violence. In other words, we need to provide alternative norms about both masculinity and femininity that value non-violence and non-aggression in boys while allowing for vulnerability.[48] In prevention education models this is referred to as a gender-transformative approach.[42,49] For taitamariki Māori, looking through an indigenous lens this can be expressed using the concepts of mana tāne and mana wāhine within whānau structures, and through challenging and decreasing their acceptance of Western traditional gender roles (in which females are considered in a submissive position relative to males who are considered in positions of power and authority[48,7]).

Structural factors

It is important to note that ARVA disproportionally impacts marginalised communities including members of ethnic,[7,50,51] sexual and gender[52,53] minority groups, and people with disabilities.[54] Using the ecological model above enables us to understand the influence on the disproportionate statistics of systemic social conditions that impact on the lives of marginalised groups. These include discrimination, less access to resources, a lack of recognition of core cultural values by the dominant culture, barriers to accessing prevention and intervention services and minority stress.

Māori today continue to be negatively impacted by colonisation, racism, poverty, social marginalisation and lack of social and institutional recognition for Te Ao Māori (Māori worldview).[55] To address issues of ARVA within Māori communities we need to recognise and remedy structural inequities while supporting Māori-centered programme development that builds on core Māori values.[55]

Minority stress can also be a useful concept to help understand how and why we see higher rates of ARVA and other forms of interpersonal violence in marginalised communities. Many marginalised individuals experience increased levels of stress in their lives due to discrimination, marginalisation, and stigma.[56] Living in an environment that is not supportive of a particular group takes a toll on that group. When working in areas related to violence it is important not to see stress as the cause of such violence; instead in the context of ARVA it focuses attention on the structural inequities that contribute to the manifestation of violence.

Understanding communities

Effective intervention and prevention strategies are specific to the communities in which they are implemented. This means that we need to understand the specific issues facing different communities in order to best support them. In marginalised communities (for example) working to address systemic inequity will likely be an important part of prevention work. It is also important to consider differences within all communities as well as regional variations. Not all people from any group will have the same understanding of ARVA.[7] Being aware of how specific communities and groups view ARVA is key to effective prevention and intervention models. Kaupapa Māori research with Taitamariki about their understandings of healthy and unhealthy intimate relationships has resulted in a number of key recommendations for this group, listed in Box 1 below.

Box 1: Taitamariki Māori Korero about Intimate Partner Relationships[7,57]

1. Taitamariki require their own programmes and support to meet their needs.
2. Taitamariki want programmes to work with them, rather than being about them – co-construct violence prevention activities with taitamariki.
3. Use the words and understandings of those words consistent with how taitamariki use them.
4. It is crucial to work with whānau as they are key influences in the lives of taitamariki.
5. Reclaim Māori values and tikanga as transformative. This includes transmission of the traditional concepts related to gender.
6. Reclaim māreikura and whatukura (Māori gender role expectations).
7. Targeted media strategies for taitamariki.
8. Use indigenous approaches.
9. Continued research and evaluation of programmes.

Respect and engagement with cultural norms and beliefs around sexuality and relationships is paramount.[58] For example, for some Pacific communities cultural norms mean that a young woman would not normally talk with male family members (or any family members) about her relationships or issues related to sexuality. The Village Collective in Auckland has developed a healthy relationships programme for young adolescents from the Pasefika community, ensuring they are consistent with cultural values and protocols.[59]
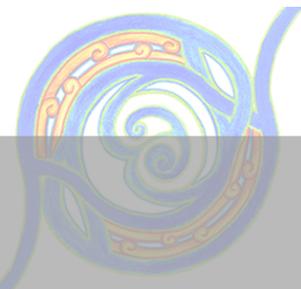
To address the needs of migrant youth of colour and Asian communities it is important to consider that relationship norms can vary in different cultures and some adolescents will not be exploring relationships. This can also mean young people hiding romantic relationships from their families. If they are then being victimised, this can deepen their isolation and vulnerability.[4] ARVA programming can still be beneficial for adolescents who choose not to date, but the information needs to be communicated appropriately in order to make it relatable for a range of young people.[2,4] In one study of young people from Asian backgrounds in New Zealand, the young people felt that school is the best place for education because they perceived their parents' generation to be reluctant to change.[4]

Mayeda and Vijaykumar who conducted a study of Asian secondary school students make the following suggestions for working with Asian adolescents around issues related to ARVA:[4]

"Lastly with regard to defining IPV, youth programming must incorporate lessons on intentionality, guiding youth to understand why unintended actions can still be considered violent. And again, these lessons must be developed and implemented considering various cultural contexts, which for migrant youth of colour would cover the ways that culturally justified male privileges facilitate men's violence against women. For instance, male intimate partners may pressure female partners to assume a completely selfless and deferent identity (the 'silent endurance') and enforce this identity with physical force. Males may not view such pressure (whether physical force is enacted or not) as violent due to historical traditions; they may view their actions as normal and lacking intent to be violent. Without culture bashing, lessons should be designed so youth can reflect critically about their cultural traditions. With regard to the 'silent endurance' and girls' identity, programming should also inspire girls to pursue educational and occupational goals for themselves, as opposed to viewing marriage as their only or primary life objective. Thus, if programmers bring in guest speakers, it would also behoove girls and boys to hear highly accomplished migrant women of colour recount their life pathways."

Mayeda, D. T., & Vijaykumar, R. (2015). Developing Intimate Partner Violence Intervention Services for Youth from Migrant Communities of Colour, p. 54[4]

In addition to ethnic minority students, LGBTIQ communities also need to be supported to develop healthy relationships. Gender minorities also experience greater stress due to living in a heterosexist and transphobic environment. Adolescence can be a key time in the lives of LGBTIQ individuals, a time where they may be coming to understand their own identities. Young people can disengage if they are not included in messages. It is important to be careful about language use, and to avoid language that presumes that all young people are heterosexual.

Irrespective of identity, different communities will be at different levels of 'readiness' to address the issue of ARVA.[19] For example, some communities will need information to help them understand that ARVA is an important issue to address. Other communities will already understand this is an issue

and will need support to change attitudes and behaviours. It is important to understand that each community may be starting from a different place, and therefore require a different approach. To this end it is paramount to work with communities to understand how ARVA impacts their community, their level of readiness to change and how to build prevention and intervention programmes that engage the community.[7]

Build on established evidence

A detailed account of the research evidence is beyond the scope of this paper. Good reviews of the research evidence are available to consult.[9,60] Looking to previous research about what works is a key step in the development of any programme. Doing so means that any programme development has a better chance of working because it makes use of what is already known. It saves both time and money on programmes that do not work.

Few programmes in New Zealand either build on this international evidence and/or have done robust evaluations (often due to a lack of resources). Accident Compensation Corporation's (ACC) Mates & Dates is a good example of a programme developed drawing on research into effective programming. Mates & Dates does not replicate any single programme, but was designed for the New Zealand context based on the knowledge of the international research evidence and conversations with New Zealand adolescents, parents, teachers and others. Mates & Dates is being delivered in 23% of high schools in 2017 (87 of 368 eligible high schools).[61] In addition, ACC have also developed a set of primary prevention guidelines for sexual violence that may be useful for development of ARVA programmes (https://svpptoolkit.nz/).

When looking to implement and/or develop prevention or intervention programmes to address ARVA the four key points (gender, structural factors, understanding communities and evidence) must be considered together. Evidence is clear that a gender transformative approach is more effective at reducing rates of violence than gender neutral approaches.[42,49] When considering research evidence it is vital to engage with local communities at the same time. Research evidence is best used with a sound understanding of the local community's unique perspectives and needs. As such, understanding the perspective of adolescents is as important for a successful programme as is building on evidence. There are potential benefits (as well as challenges) in having adolescents play a larger role in programme development, implementation, delivery and evaluation. Co-constructing programmes with adolescents is consistent with a positive youth development approach. There is currently no empirical data on effectiveness of youth-led violence prevention initiatives however potential benefits include greater relevance to and engagement by adolescents, especially considering peers' especially strong influence on ideas and behaviours during the teenage years.[7,62–64] Potential challenges include departure from evidence-based content and delivery methods and the time and money required for training, particularly as adolescents inevitably age out of programmes.[62]
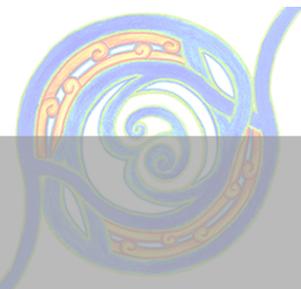
5.   Intervention once abuse has occurred

Intervention services are designed to work with people who have both experienced and/or used relationship abuse. Existing services include helplines such as YouthLine and Outline, women's refuges and rape crisis centres. There are very few services specifically for young people experiencing relationship violence and abuse. Existing services are either focused broadly on supporting youth with a range of potential issues and services focused on relationship violence are often focused on adults, although they will also support adolescents. Many young people who experience ARVA are not accessing the services that exist[65,66] and when they do it is often months or even years after the incident. Research suggests that few young people will reach out to professionals or adults to discuss issues related to relationship violence.[65] Instead, they will talk with peers[65,66] and especially for taitamariki Māori they may engage whānau members such as older cousins.[57] Barriers to accessing services included fear of their partner, lack of knowledge about the available services and organisations and uncertainty about the professionals themselves.[65] Many young people fear that they may be blamed for their victimisation and feel embarrassed or reluctant to talk about issues related to sexuality with adults.[66] Adults (including parents and professionals) may also not perceive adolescents' relationships or relationship violence to be as 'serious' or as harmful as adult violence.[7]

Box 2: Increasing adolescents' engagement with intervention services

To increase use of intervention resources it is important to:

- Provide young people with information on when it might be useful for them to seek support.[66]
- Inform them of the available services[65,66]
- Communicate with them a clear description of how any details or information will be used. Many young people distrust professionals because they did not know what would happen during appointments or what if any actions would be taken about the information they shared.[57,65,66]
- Provide culturally relevant services. Knowing that services will respect young people's culture facilitates disclosures to those services.[66]
- Provide youth-friendly resources. Services should be easily accessible to young people in the spaces they normally inhabit – both real and virtual spaces. For example, Youthline provides support through texting and online chatting, in addition to phone and in-person support.[67]
- Provide skill development for peers, family and whānau to support young people.[7,66]
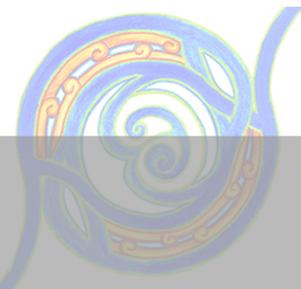

The "Roastbusters" case of 2014 highlighted the need for greater support for adolescents from agencies such as New Zealand Police and Child, Youth and Family (CYF; now the Ministry for Vulnerable Children, Oranga Tamariki). Investigations into the handling of the "Roastbusters" cases were completed by both the New Zealand Police[68] and CYF.[69] Both reports highlighted the need for greater interagency collaboration and information sharing; a better understanding of ARVA and sexual abuse and issues around capacity and consent to sexual activity; and more advanced training on working with adolescents and adolescent development.

6. Prevention

When applying an ecological perspective to prevention, it becomes clear that ARVA is not a behaviour that spontaneously emerges in adolescence. For example, perpetrating ARVA has been connected with bullying in primary and intermediate school.[70] Longitudinal studies have supported this work and suggest that aggression at younger ages predicts relationship violence and adult spouse/partner abuse.[71–73] This research suggests that programmes in primary school for building healthy friendships and prevention of bullying can have important effects as children move into adolescence. Starting young has other advantages as well. Young people have relatively malleable relationships providing opportunity to establish new norms.[74] As people get older their habits and patterns in relationships become more resistant to change.[74]

Public health models of violence prevention divide prevention strategies into three types: primary, secondary and tertiary.[9] Primary forms of prevention deal broadly with social and cultural factors that contribute to violence and are often targeted to the entire population. Secondary forms of prevention are targeted to "at risk" groups of people who are either showing early signs of perpetration, or the potential for victimisation. Tertiary forms of prevention intervene after violence has occurred to reduce its effects and prevent re-occurrence. Early forms of prevention engaged the individual, and tended to be deficit based (assumed a lack of knowledge); recent shifts take a multi-level approach, understand the contributions of the broader social contexts and are strengths-based.

Despite a proliferation of healthy relationships programmes internationally, the vast majority of such programmes are not evaluated.[9,19] Programmes that have shown effectiveness for the prevention of adolescent relationship violence, including those focused on sexual violence prevention, have several things in common, listed in Box 3 below.
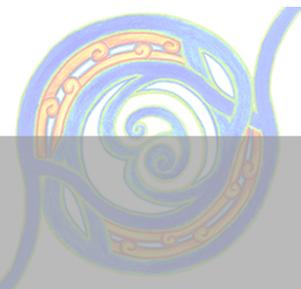
Box 3: Elements of ARVA prevention programmes showing effectiveness

1. Whole school approaches work across curriculum, school policy, school culture and relationships with community, families and whanau.[9,29,78]

2. Strengths-based programmes.[79,80] Programmes should help build positive, healthy relationships and begin from an understanding that adolescents are experts in their own lives.

3. Facilitated in small groups of students (less than 30).[81]

4. Sufficient hours. Safe Dates consists of nine 45-minute sessions plus a 45 minute play, a poster contest and parent materials. The Fourth R is 21-lesson curriculum delivered during 28 hours by teachers, with additional training in the dynamics of dating violence and healthy relationships.[82]

5. Interactive skills-based programming. Rather than hearing information, students must be given the opportunity to practice implementing ideas and engaging in new behaviours. Role-plays are one great way of helping students learn new skills.

6. Skilled facilitation is key to success. The biggest impediment to teacher-facilitated programming is a lack of training for teachers to deliver the material.[9,83] Many school-based programmes in New Zealand and internationally[9] use community educators for delivery. Peer facilitated programmes in particular, but programmes delivered by presenters from outside of the school tend to also be more effective.[84] Delivery of potentially sensitive or embarrassing material is easier for the students when facilitators are not part of the school community.[85]

Suitable skills and training in facilitation are key to success.[86,87] Teaching in highly personal areas such as relationships and sexuality require a different skill set compared with teaching other core subjects.[88,89] Secondary students reported that it was the qualities of the facilitator rather than their role that was important.[90] Students preferred instructors who were knowledgeable and relatable. One of the most comprehensive facilitator training programmes comes from a rape resistance programme for university women.[91] The training includes 15 hours of reading, seven full days of training, followed by time set aside for practice, and weekly meetings with the trainer during training and delivery to discuss tricky issues as they come up and monitor for consistency. This programme increased the duration of its effectiveness from three months to two years by adding two additional hours of time to their programme (increasing it from 10 hours to 12 hours)[91] specifically for practising skills. This type of comprehensive training can serve to ensure consistency in delivery.
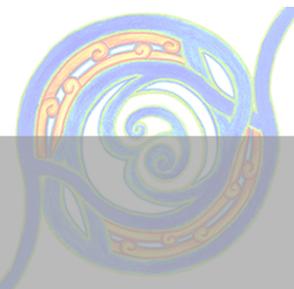
Case Study: Safe Dates

The Programme:

Safe Dates is a school and community-based dating violence prevention programme developed in the United States for intermediate students. It consists of a 45-minute drama presentation and 9 additional sessions of about 45 minutes each plus a poster contest and parent materials. The sessions are run in schools and cover a range of topics including defining dating abuse, overcoming gender stereotypes, equal power through communication and helping friends. Sessions were also available for community members, including support groups for youth and information for parents.

The Evidence:

Results of longitudinal randomised control studies conclude that the programme is effective at reducing psychological, physical and sexual violence perpetration[75–77]. Researchers studied the same group of students four years after implementation and found that students who participated in the Safe Dates program reported 56% to 92% less physical, serious physical, and sexual dating violence victimisation and perpetration than teens who did not participate in Safe Dates. This effect was still present four years after the initial intervention. While the effects were consistent across ethnicities, the authors caution that more work is required to understand how effective the programme would be in other areas of the United States and internationally.

School-based programmes are crucial for creating change related to ARVA. Recently, then Minister of Education Hekia Parata suggested that consent education is best left to families.[92] When we approach ARVA from an ecological model we can see that for some adolescents and taitamariki, there are issues at home that contribute to their experiences of ARVA. Of equal importance are broader social norms that also support ARVA (for example, gender stereotypes, beliefs about masculinity and aggression, and ideas that abuse within intimate relationships is normal).[93] To address these broader issues education needs to be supported across multiple settings, and school-based programmes are a vital part of this education.

While school-based programmes are important, they have their challenges and limitations. It can be difficult for schools to accommodate the length of programming required for effective programmes. Particularly in the last few years of study schools often struggle to find space in the curriculum. Sexuality is a compulsory component of the health curriculum for years 1 to 10 in New Zealand[94] and schools are required through the Education Act to consult with their communities biannually about their sexuality education.[95] As defined in the curriculum, sexuality education requires attention to social and emotional aspects of sex and relationships, including respectful relationships and consent.

However an Education Review Office audit in 2007 found that most sexuality education programmes were not meeting students' needs effectively.[96] It is unknown how many schools comply with the curriculum and present comprehensive sexuality education. The Ministry of Education has produced guidelines on sexuality education to support the further development of comprehensive sexuality education in schools however it is up to schools how they utilise the guidelines. ERO is currently carrying out another national evaluation review of sexuality education.[97] Further development of sexuality education in schools could be supported by increased accountability to the Education Review Office (ERO) auditing process.

While schools are important places for the development of young people, they are not the only places where young people develop their sense of community. As such community prevention models are an important part of promoting healthy relationships and have the potential to work alongside school-based models. CDC has developed an interactive guide to inform organisational and public policy on teen dating violence. It is designed to support communities' efforts to implement prevention strategies in schools, with families and in neighbourhoods.

Dating Matters: Interactive Guide on Informing Policy (CDC, 2017)

Looking at organisational policy and public policy, this guide provides a useful framework for ensuring that the best available data, evidence, and practice are included in policy development, implementation, and evaluation. Using interactive questions, visuals and summaries, the guide:

- Sets out how policy can prevent teen dating violence.
- Describes the policy process.
- Provides information and resources on analysing policy, developing policy goals, identifying potential policy strategies, implementing policy, and evaluating both efforts to inform policy and the impacts of policy.
- Provides example policies.
- Lists some evidence-based teen dating violence prevention programmes.

The guide also includes links to practical worksheets, tools and resources related to policy efforts, reaching consensus, evaluation and partnership building.

In New Zealand, community based initiatives include the It's not OK campaign that combine social marketing approaches with community involvement. Different communities put forward local "champions" as role models for change. Champions include a group of secondary school students from the Clutha region.[98] A toolkit is accessible on their website http://areyouok.org.nz/utility-pages/news/champions-campaigns/. *dearem* is a New Zealand website aimed at empowering young women. They feature articles by young women and encourage involvement in social media
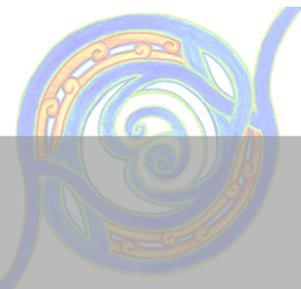
discussions about women's empowerment and taking a stand against violence, http://www.dearem.nz. Sex and Ethics (see below) is a programme designed to be delivered in community groups. Further investment in community-based initiatives is warranted, alongside resourcing for research and evaluation in order to continue to build knowledge of effectiveness.

Case Study: Sex and Ethics[99,100]

Sex and Ethics is a programme designed in Australia to help young people learn how to engage in ethical sexual relating. The programme is designed for delivery in community groups and adaptable to different cultural backgrounds. It is currently offered through the Wellington Sexual Abuse Prevention Network.[101] Key points to the programme include:[74]

- Understanding different cultural perspectives on sexuality
- How young people can decide what is right for them
- How to handle social pressures about being sexual
- How alcohol and drugs influence sexual decision making
- Legal understandings of consent
- Issues related to social media and sex
- How to negotiate sexual desires in a relationship
- How to recognise warning signs of unhealthy relationships
- Ending relationships
- Ethical bystanding

7. Conclusion

Adolescent relationship abuse is a persistent problem that requires further attention and resource in New Zealand. This issues paper outlines the scope of the problem and provides information on how policy and practice can effectively work toward diminishing the problem of abuse in adolescent relationships. Prevention and early intervention are key to making long-term change. Programmes that aim to shift gendered norms are a critical part of creating this change.

In addition, the adage of "think globally, act locally" is somewhat of a truism in the response to ARVA. In this context 'thinking globally' means capitalising on the increasing evidence from across the world about what works to shift attitudes and behaviours. Building on this evidence will avoid making the same mistakes as others and maximise chances for success. Further growing the evidence in New Zealand, in particular further kaupapa Māori research with indigenous young people in their contexts is warranted. 'Acting locally' ensures the use of this evidence is informed by knowledge of local communities and a deep understanding of specific community attitudes and norms about relationships. Therefore we need a balance between building strong programmes grounded in available international evidence while at the same time recognising the unique compositions of our communities, and building further knowledge as we go.
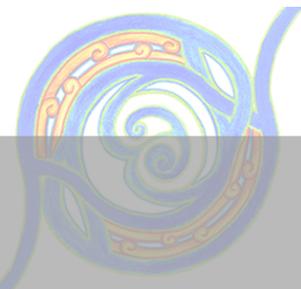
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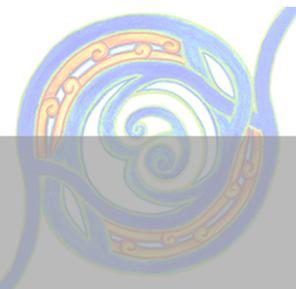
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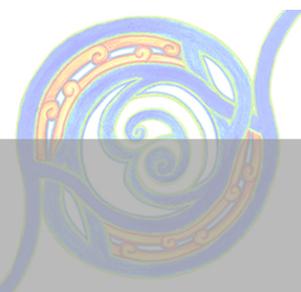
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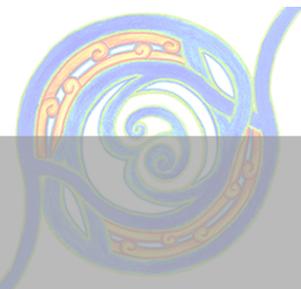
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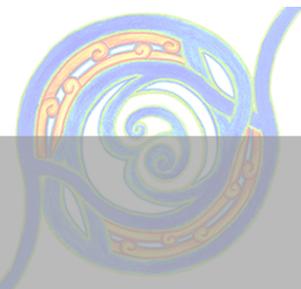
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