



Home Office

# **This is Abuse campaign**

## Summary report

# Introduction

This report summarises the development and evaluation of the 'This is Abuse' campaign since it launched in February 2010.

Research by the NSPCC<sup>1</sup> showed that teenagers didn't understand what constituted abusive behaviours such as controlling behaviours, which could escalate to physical abuse, eg. checking someone's phone, telling them what to wear, who they can/can't see or speak to and that this abuse was prevalent within teen relationships. This led to these abusive behaviours feeling 'normal' and therefore left unchallenged as they were not recognised as being abusive.

Further research showed that teenagers didn't understand what consent meant within their relationships. They often held the common misconception that rape could only be committed by a stranger down a dark alley and didn't understand that it could happen within their own relationships.

In response to this the Home Office developed two campaigns which aimed to prevent teenagers from becoming victims and perpetrators of abusive relationships by encouraging them to re-think their views of violence, abuse and controlling behaviours, and understand what consent meant within their relationships. By aiming the campaigns at 13 to 18 year old boys and girls we hoped to influence teenager's attitudes and behaviours before they became more entrenched in adulthood.

Further evaluation showed that abuse and rape were not viewed as separate entities by teenagers, but rather viewed on a continuum of abuse, and as a result the two campaigns were brought together under the banner of 'This is Abuse' in December 2013.

A breakdown of campaigns timings, aims, objectives and the channels used to communicate with teenagers are listed in Annex A.

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<sup>1</sup> See Annex C for links to research and other background information

# Awareness of the campaign and potential changes in attitudes

To evaluate the campaigns, Ipsos Mori conducted tracking research<sup>2</sup> before and after each burst of campaign activity. This evaluation found that:

- **Awareness of issues relating to sexual abuse, violence and rape improves following campaign activity, indicating that the creative is cutting through effectively**

Results were split into teenagers who said they had seen the campaign adverts ('recognisers') and those that hadn't ('non-recognisers'). Encouragingly, awareness of the issues improved more among 'recognisers' than 'non recognisers' which could indicate that teenagers are understanding the campaign messages and recognising abusive behaviours.

- **Likelihood to take action increases for those recognising the campaign. This is true in all instances where abuse, controlling behaviours, violence and pressure is:**
  - **personally experienced**
  - **experienced by a friend**
  - **being perpetrated by a friend**

See Annex B for breakdown of results.

Also, comments<sup>3</sup> left on the 'This is Abuse' website online discussion forums also support this finding:

"I've broken up with my boyfriend of nearly 6 months. After watching this video, the exact words of 'you're pathetic, are you gonna go cry to your friends' echoed in my mind. He has said those exact words to me on many occasions. He put me down, stopped me from talking to my friends who were boys, checked my inbox, my texts, physically pushed me around.. I don't see why I didn't see this before."

"Hi, your advert with the two characters from Hollyoaks woke me up..I was in a relationship with a boy who would act like that with me..if I was going out with friends I would show him my outfit and he would tell me that I needed to cover up as it was slutty and it never was..I never thought this was abuse, I would just go along with it and do what he said or he would get mad and shout..threaten to leave me because he could so much better if he wanted to..that advert saved me, he was grinding me down and because of seeing that I was able to realise what he was doing to me and I left him..so thankyou because now I am so much better and I am nearly back to the old me! :)"

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<sup>2</sup> 800 pre and post online interviews were run with our target audience of boys and girls aged 13 to 18 years old before and after each burst of campaign activity and looked at awareness and understanding of the campaign.

<sup>3</sup> All example comments cited throughout this document have been taken verbatim from the website so include spelling/grammar mistakes.

- **Analysis of ‘recognisers’ responses has shown the campaign has helped to challenge and get teens to question myths that exist around the definition of rape and the need for consent**

Comments left on the online discussion forums also support this finding:

“I used to convince myself that what happened to me wasn’t rape and that it was my fault, but after seeing this advertised made realise that what happened to me wasn’t my fault and I feel so much better about myself that he was an animal and I was just the victim. Thank yuu for tthis video as I was only 15 and am now 16, has helped alot. :)”

“So even when you’re in a relationship and they force you to have sex, it is still rape?”

Campaigns are very effective at generating awareness, but attitudinal change is notoriously difficult to achieve and usually takes time to embed over a number of years before behaviour change might be seen. Also, in the crowded media and advertising environment it is often difficult to say for certain that it is a campaign that has had a direct effect on a target audience.

Research, undertaken by Define<sup>4</sup> in 2013, to develop the ‘This is Abuse’ campaign identified it as working in a highly complex environment with a wide array of ‘negative’ influences that are encouraging / legitimising coercion, and the Teenage Rape Prevention advert was the only consistent “lone voice” working to challenge these.

It is important to acknowledge that the evaluation results show that attitudes have not changed at a total level, which could reflect the cultural context in which our messages are being communicated. Evidence points to growing availability of internet porn and sexting behaviour, along with harmful attitudes towards women within the media/social channels which makes abusive behaviour seem more ‘acceptable’, and means that changing attitudes becomes ever harder. Additionally, with approximately 700,000 young people entering the target audience bracket each year the campaign continually work hard to raise awareness and understanding amongst this new cohort of young people.

However, we can see from comments which have been left on the discussion forums on the ‘This is Abuse’ website that the adverts have helped young people to recognise abusive behaviours, and in some cases sought help and/or left abusive relationships as a result.

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<sup>4</sup> [www.defineinsight.co.uk](http://www.defineinsight.co.uk)

# Summary of key learning's from the development of the campaign activity

We have learnt some key lessons during the development of the campaign, from 2010 to date, which may be useful for others to consider when planning a campaign on a similar issue or to a teenage audience.

## Positive impact of working with celebrities

Working in partnership with MTV and Channel 4 teen soap Hollyoaks allowed us to talk to teens in an environment we know they used, via celebrities/channels we know they trusted and followed and in a way they could relate to.

For the 'This is Abuse' campaign which launched in 2013, we worked with Hollyoaks to develop two adverts using two characters (Patrick Blake and Maxine Minniver) who were already involved in an abusive storyline. One advert showed that abuse within relationships wasn't always physical and the other highlighted that rape can happen within a relationship. The adverts were supported by a timeline on the Hollyoaks facebook page so viewers could look back and track the signs of abuse within Maxine and Patrick's relationship enabling us to show how abuse can escalate over time. We also scheduled tweets and facebook posts to go out at key points in the storyline so we could get our messages to an engaged audience at a relevant time. When we ran the campaign Hollyoaks had 1.63m social media followers and the programme generated 18k tweets per week<sup>5</sup>. By linking in with this existing storyline it created opportunities to get these important messages out to a teen audience as well as use the Hollyoaks facebook page to signpost teenagers to the 'This is Abuse' campaign website to get further advice and support.

MTV also developed adverts with a range of credible and high profile celebrities to act as a counter narrative within the sometimes highly sexualised environment of music TV. In the MTV adverts, celebrities such as Example, Jason Derulo, The Wanted and others "call out" relationship abuse and encourage teens to make a stand. The adverts ran across all MTV channels with a call for young people to #callitout, harnessing the power of social media as a voice for young people to stand up against these issues.

Through the partnership with MTV and Hollyoaks, along with supporting radio and digital advertising, and PR, we saw the largest ever uplift in visits to the 'This is Abuse' website in comparison to previous waves of the campaign. There were more than double the number of unique visits to the site (over 900k) compared to the previous campaign. This shows the power of working with a credible partner who is trusted by the teenage audience, has an existing and highly engaged social media community and is therefore able to drive more traffic through to the campaign website.

## Making the campaign work better for boys

We know it is harder to reach boys through more traditional forms of advertising and that some boys don't want to visit a website that labels them as an abuser but they still want to find out more information on these issues. So, we worked closely with expert partners and our agencies to develop a campaign that worked more effectively for boys.

We knew from Define's research that the name 'This is Abuse' could be a barrier to boys, so we tested various website names with teen boys and developed a page on the campaign website

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<sup>5</sup> source BARB

which was specifically aimed at boys called 'In the Know'. You can view this page at: <http://thisisabuse.direct.gov.uk/in-the-know> and all of the media which was targeted towards boys signposted this page on the website as place to go for further advice and support.

To reach boys through a more effective channel we worked with credible vloggers ("video bloggers") who are very popular on You Tube. We know that boys, in particular, use You Tube a lot<sup>6</sup> and were already engaging with the vloggers we worked with. Working with Mandem on the Wall, Charlie McDonnell & Twist & Pulse we produced a series of online video blogs which aimed to help young people, in particular boys, understand what constitutes abusive behaviour, including sexting, and how to recognise consent.

This activity helped to drive an improvement in awareness of the seriousness of relationship abuse and rape amongst teenage boys, the consequences of sexual non-consent, and their intention to seek help if they needed it. The evaluation<sup>7</sup> of this activity showed that:

- 67% of boys who saw the adverts were more likely to seek consent as a result;
- 70% feel more likely to recognise if someone does not want to have sex; and
- 80% agree the videos made them understand that abuse is not always physical.

## Providing effective specialist support for teenagers

All campaign activity signposts the 'This is Abuse' website ([www.thisisabuse.direct.gov.uk](http://www.thisisabuse.direct.gov.uk)) as a place for teenagers to get further information on what abusive behaviours are, and to help them understand the myths around abuse and rape. The 'need help' section on the website also signposts other organisations which provide help and support.

Over the years the website has built up credibility amongst our teenage audience and we have seen more teenagers using the discussion forums on the website to seek help about abusive relationships and ask if what they were experiencing was actually abuse.

We recognised the need to provide teenagers with specialist support and advice at the point of contact, which would be more beneficial than just signposting them onto another organisation. Following a tender, run by the Government Procurement Service in November 2013, the Home Office appointed Respect (men's advice line) and AVA (Against Violence and Abuse) to provide trained specialists to moderate the online discussion forums, which ensured teenagers were receiving expert advice at point of contact. We have seen from the comments and detailed discussion on the site that providing a credible, safe place to discuss abusive behaviour is key and since the campaign launched in 2010 the website has received over 2 million unique visitors. We can see from the comments left on the discussion forums that the adverts are having an impact on teenagers helping them to identify and understand abusive behaviours.

"I am so grateful for all the information on this website. I broke up with my ex in January and this website has really helped me come to terms in learning that in actual fact i WAS in an emotionally abusive relationship, (even though it felt like i was overreacting/making a fuss over nothing) and i'm glad i was able to leave when i could."

Also, the specialist support provided by Respect and AVA ensured teenagers received the right information and support at the initial point of contact.

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<sup>6</sup> 72% of teens visit YouTube regularly – Source TGI

<sup>7</sup> Research commissioned via Base79 and carried out via Research Bods (<http://www.researchbods.com/>). Pre online survey: 303 respondents and Post online survey: 312 respondents (49% respondent boys and 51% girls)

## Working effectively through partners

Professionals who work directly with teenagers have an important role in extending the reach of the campaign as they are able to talk, in more detail, directly to teenagers about these issues. By providing them with support materials, which included posters, postcards and a DVD of the campaign adverts<sup>8</sup>, we were able to extend the reach of the campaign and give partners tools to start to facilitate these discussions. Since the campaign launched in 2010, professionals have ordered over 900,000 of these support materials which have been distributed free of charge.

We know that the campaign adverts are good at prompting teenagers to think about these issues and also start to identify with them, but the adverts can not continue the conversation alone. Working with partners we developed a discussion guide<sup>9</sup> for professionals which sets out common misconceptions which teenagers hold when it comes to their attitudes towards abuse, controlling behaviour and consent within their relationships and provides guides and tips on how to use the campaign support materials in discussions with teenagers on these issues. In 2013, the PSHE Association quality assured the guide and said it was an excellent resource for professionals.

“The PSHE Association is very pleased to have contributed to the development of a new discussion guide supporting the Home Office’s ‘This is Abuse’ campaign. The guide has been produced so it can be used with a wide range of organisations, including schools, who work directly with young people.

We believe that the guide is an excellent resource for PSHE teachers, full of rich and detailed material. Given the amount of material, it is easy and quick to read and digest, and then for teachers to adapt and use to meet the needs of their pupils. It provides everything a teacher should need to set up a powerful piece of learning about this crucial issue, and we are delighted to award it our quality mark.”

As well as using the support materials we know the campaign has also galvanised partners to use the outdoor and TV adverts to run their own localised campaigns. Making the adverts available to partners, meant they could achieve better value for money from their local budgets as they didn’t have to pay for the development of campaign creative and could concentrate their budgets on paying for advertising space.

The campaign has also been recognised as a credible and effective campaign winning leading industry award acclaim. Most recently in 2014 it won the Campaign Media Award for best Public Sector and Charity campaign, and further awards at the 2014 media Week Awards: one Gold Award (for best campaign re-launch) and three Silver Awards (one for best large collaboration, and one each for best media idea).

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<sup>8</sup> Includes posters, postcards, DVD of campaign adverts and leaflets for parents and carers  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/this-is-abuse-campaign>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/this-is-abuse-discussion-guide>

# Annex A

<b>Teenage Relationship Abuse</b>			
<b>Timings</b>	<b>Aims</b>	<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Channels</b>
February to March 2010 August to December 2011 February to April 2013	Prevent teenagers from becoming victims and perpetrators of abusive relationships. By encouraging teenagers to re-think their views of violence, abuse and controlling behaviours within their relationships and direct them to places for help and advice	<p>Raise awareness of the issue of relationship abuse</p> <p>Improve understanding of what constitutes relationship abuse (not just physical it can also be emotional abuse and controlling behaviour as well)</p> <p>Empower teenagers to identify, challenge and report abusive behaviours</p>	<p>Over the three bursts of campaign activity, adverts were shown using a combination of the following channels:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- TV</li> <li>- Cinema</li> <li>- Digital/online</li> <li>- Outdoor posters</li> <li>- Press adverts</li> <li>- Radio adverts</li> <li>- PR</li> <li>- Partnerships with MTV</li> </ul> <p>Supported by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- campaign materials distributed to partners who work with teenagers</li> <li>- Press Office led media activity and PR</li> </ul>
<b>Teenage Rape Prevention</b>			
March to April 2012 December 2012 to January 2013	Prevent teenagers from becoming victims and perpetrators of abusive relationships. By encouraging teenagers to re-think their views of rape and sexual assault and understand what consent means within their relationships and direct them to places for help and advice	<p>Raise awareness of the issue of rape and sexual violence</p> <p>Improve understanding of what constitutes rape, sexual violence and consent</p> <p>Empower teenagers to identify, challenge and report sexually abusive behaviour and actively seek and recognise consent</p>	<p>Over the two bursts of campaign activity, adverts were shown using a combination of the following channels:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- TV</li> <li>- Cinema</li> <li>- Digital/online</li> </ul> <p>Supported by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- campaign materials distributed to partners who work with teenagers</li> <li>- Press Office led media activity and PR</li> </ul>



<b>This is Abuse</b>			
<p>December 2013 to April 2014</p>	<p>Prevent teenagers from becoming victims and perpetrators of abusive relationships, including sexual violence. By encouraging teenagers to re-think their views of violence, abuse, controlling behaviours and what consent means within their relationships and direct them to places for help and advice</p>	<p>Raise awareness of the issue of relationship abuse</p> <p>Raise awareness of the issue of rape and sexual violence</p> <p>Improve understanding of what constitutes relationship abuse (not just physical it can also be emotional abuse and controlling behaviour as well)</p> <p>Improve understanding of what constitutes rape, sexual violence and consent</p> <p>Empower teenagers to identify, challenge and report abusive and sexually abusive behaviour and actively seek and recognise consent</p>	<p>During this burst of campaign activity, adverts were shown using a combination of the following channels:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- TV</li> <li>- Digital/online</li> <li>- Radio</li> <li>- Partnerships with MTV, Hollyoaks, Kiss FM and Vloggers</li> </ul> <p>Supported by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- campaign materials distributed to partners who work with teenagers</li> <li>- Press Office led media activity and PR</li> </ul>

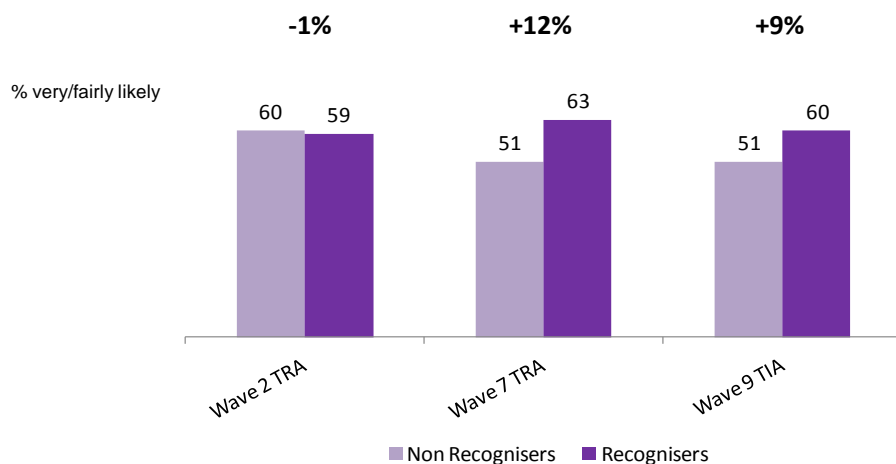
# Annex B

Charts to show results<sup>10</sup> of 'recognisers' v's 'non-recognisers' where likelihood to take action increases for those recognising the campaign.

This is true in all instances where abuse, controlling behaviours, violence and pressure is:

## Personally experienced

After repeated airtime for the TRA campaign, more recognisers claim that if they were faced with controlling behaviour, verbal abuse or physical violence, they would report it

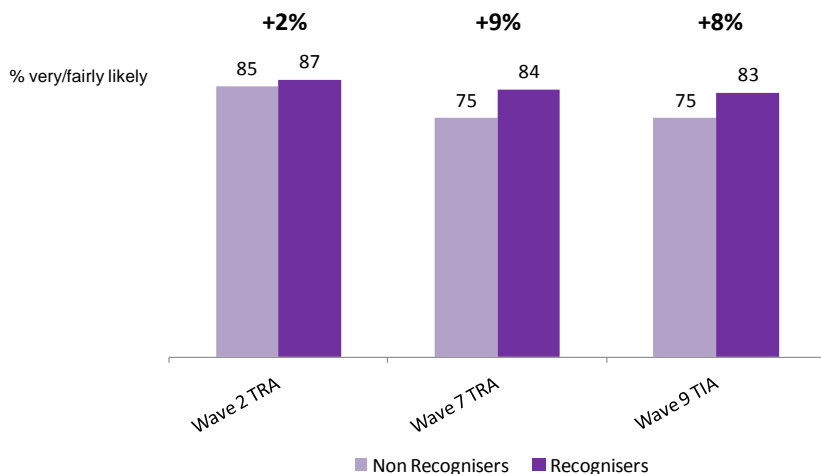


Q18/Q25 if you were faced with controlling behaviour, verbal abuse, or physical violence in a relationship with a boyfriend/girlfriend, how likely or unlikely would you be to report the abusive behaviour to someone?

<sup>10</sup> 'Wave 2' covers evaluation undertaken from October to November 2011 (Teenage Relationship Abuse campaign); 'Wave 7' covers evaluation undertaken during April 2013 (Teenage Relationship Abuse campaign) and 'Wave 9' covers evaluation undertaken from March to April 2014 (This is Abuse campaign).

## Experienced by a friend

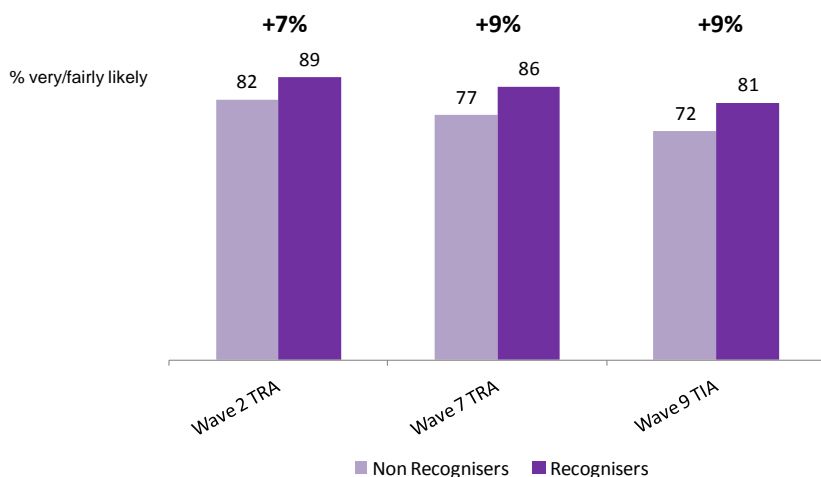
Evidence to suggest that the campaign has also encouraged more girls to support friends who may be victims..



Q19/Q26 if you knew that your friend was faced with controlling behaviour, verbal abuse, or physical violence in a relationship with a boyfriend/girlfriend, how likely or unlikely would you be to encourage your friend to speak to their boyfriend/girlfriend and ask them to stop?

## Being perpetrated by a friend

..as well as encouraging more boys to challenge friends when they demonstrate negative behaviour



Q20/Q27 if you knew that your friend was using controlling behaviour, verbal abuse, or physical violence in a relationship with their boyfriend/girlfriend, how likely or unlikely would you be to speak to your friend and ask them to stop?

# Annex C: other background information

## **14 September 2011 – publication of ‘Standing on my own two feet’**

This research report from the University of Bristol and the NSPCC looks at intimate partner violence in the relationships of disadvantaged young people.

It focuses on the experiences of young people outside mainstream education, young mothers, young offenders, young people living in residential care and young people at risk of sexual exploitation.

The findings are compared with a larger study of young people in mainstream schools which provided a picture of the incidence and impact of teenage partner violence in Great Britain (Barter et al 2009).

You can access the report on the NSPCC website.

<http://www.nspcc.org.uk/globalassets/documents/research-reports/standing-own-two-feet-report.pdf>

## **08 March 2011 – Call to End Violence Against Women and Girls: Action Plan**

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/118153/vawg-action-plan.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/118153/vawg-action-plan.pdf)

**The Government Response to the Stern Review: An independent review into how rape complaints are handled by public authorities in England and Wales**

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/97907/government-stern-review.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/97907/government-stern-review.pdf)

**This is Abuse campaign page on GOV.UK, includes links to support materials and discussion guide**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/this-is-abuse-campaign>