

Institution: Leeds Beckett University		
Unit of Assessment: 4a		
Title of case study: Combatting sexual bullying in Europe through the peer-led training of young people and legislative change		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2013 - 2015		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Kate Milnes	Senior Lecturer in Psychology	2006 - Present
Tamara Turner-Moore	Senior Lecturer in Psychology	2009 - Present
Brendan Gough	Professor of Social Psychology	2012 - Present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2013- present		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)		
<p>The ACT Pack is a research-informed intervention helping to prevent sexual bullying among young people in Italy, Latvia, Slovenia, Bulgaria and England. It is designed to help youth aged 13-18 recognise sexual bullying and protect themselves and others from harm. Since 2015, the pack has been implemented with over 6000 young people in the five countries and 1200 teachers and youth workers have been trained using the ACT pack. The research has also influenced changes to Relationship and Sex Education policy in England (2017) and legislation in Italy on cyberbullying (2017) and gender-based violence (2019).</p>		
2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)		
<p>In 2012, sexual bullying was identified as increasingly prevalent throughout Europe, leading to ill-health, school absence, and at times, suicide (Hammarberg, 2011; Kane, 2008; Duffy, 2004). In Europe, sexual bullying had received less attention than other forms of peer-violence and cross-national programmes to address it were lacking (Hammarberg, 2011), particularly programmes that empowered young people through peer-to-peer delivery (Livingstone et al., 2011). Our project addressed this gap and adopted a participatory action approach to understand and prevent sexual bullying (encompassing sexual harassment, bullying about sexual identity or expression, and transphobic bullying) in young people aged 13-18 in five European countries.</p> <p>The EC-funded ASBAE project (January 2013-2015; 314,366 EUR), co-led by Milnes and Turner-Moore, included the Leeds Beckett team (Milnes, Turner-Moore, Gough) and NGOs in five European countries: Demetra Association (Bulgaria), Institute for Enhancement and Development of Quality of Life Institute for Enhancement and</p>		

Development of Quality of Life (PAPILOT; Slovenia), **Leap Confronting Conflict** (UK), **Pepita Società Cooperativa Sociale onlus** (Italy), **Resource Centre for Women** (MARTA; Latvia). The team's grant application was ranked 1st by the EC out of 481 proposals. The project comprised two phases: firstly, research on sexual bullying, and secondly, designing the intervention based on the research findings and piloting it across the five countries. Leeds Beckett led the project and the research phase. A Young People Advisory Group (YPAG) in each of the five countries provided locally-relevant input and feedback throughout the project.

The research involved focus groups and questionnaires with 253 young people and focus groups with 37 professionals in the field of child education and protection. The validity of the data analysis was tracked via researcher triangulation, transparency and reflexivity, and findings were discussed with all partners and YPAGs, and captured in the project research report [3.1]. Key findings include:

1. Young people initially understood sexual bullying to be synonymous with sexual violence [3.1-3.2];
2. Sexual bullying varied in its content (e.g. appearance, sex, sexuality, gender-based) and form (verbal, physical, cyber, non-verbal) [3.1,3.3];
3. Young people often downplayed the potential harm of sexual bullying by suggesting that it was a joke or harmless fun [3.1-3.4];
4. Prejudices, norms and expectations relating to gender and sexuality could contribute to or perpetuate sexual bullying [3.1-3.4];
5. Technology-mediated sexual bullying was highly prevalent [3.1,3.3-3.4];
6. Young people saw the use of scenarios (e.g. media clips, videos, role-playing) as a highly effective means of raising awareness of sexual bullying and how to tackle it [3.1];
7. Young people suggested that their peers are a particularly important source of support and are well-placed to play key roles in the prevention of sexual bullying [3.1].

Directly informed by the research findings, we made 12 recommendations for designing and delivering sexual bullying interventions. For example, that interventions should cover: what constitutes sexual bullying [finding 1 & 2], differences between joking and bullying [finding 3], questioning gender and sexuality norms [finding 4], and how to report and respond to technology-mediated sexual bullying [finding 5]. The recommendations also highlighted the utility of employing scenarios [finding 6] and peer-to-peer delivery [finding 7].

The Leeds Beckett team also produced academic articles for established journals focusing on different features of the rich dataset. These papers have made contributions to the literature by highlighting variations in sexual bullying within and between countries [3.3], explicating the core issue of consent in social interactions and relationships involving young people [3.2], and identifying the pressures experienced by young men to perform 'masculinity' with male and female peers [3.4].

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

3.1 Milnes, K., Turner-Moore, T., Gough, B., Denison, J., Gättere, L., Haslam, C., Videva, D., Zajsek, T., & Zoppi, I. (2015). Sexual bullying in young people across five European countries: Research report for the ASBAE project. Prepared for the European Commission. <http://eprints.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/1435/>

3.2 Milnes, K., Turner-Moore, T. & Gough, B. (under review). Consent as a common thread in young people's definitions and understandings of sexual bullying. Submitted to *Journal of Youth Studies*.

3.3 Turner-Moore, T., Milnes, K. & Gough, B. (under review). Sexual bullying in five European countries: Intersections between bullying or harassment that is sexualised, related to sexuality, or related to gender expression. Submitted to *Sex Roles*.

3.4 Gough, B., Milnes, K., & Turner-Moore, T. (2019). Young masculinities across five European countries: Performing under pressure. *Journal of Youth Studies*. Available online: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13676261.2019.1695763>

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

Our intervention, 'the ACT Pack', incorporated all 12 of our research-informed recommendations. The pack includes a three-day training programme for young facilitators and the adults who support them, and the materials and evaluation tools for a two-day peer-to-peer workshop to address sexual bullying. The workshop covers five themes - awareness of sexual bullying, gender and sexuality, sexting, effects of sexual bullying and tackling sexual bullying – and incorporates discussions, media clips, role-play and other interactive activities.

Empowered young people in Bulgaria, England, Italy, Latvia and Slovenia

Our project impacted over 6400 young people through the project activities and implementation of the ACT pack. Over 400 young people across the five countries participated in the research and intervention phases, reporting, for example, that they were better able to recognise sexual bullying following the focus group discussions (*'now I definitely know what lies under sexual bullying'* [5.1]) and better equipped to respond to sexual bullying after participating in the intervention (*'It helps you to understand what are the best things to do in case you witness bullying'* [5.1]). Since the project, the ACT pack has been implemented in schools across the five countries. For example, our Latvian partner used the ACT pack with 200 young people in 2016-2017 and have since developed youth programmes which draw heavily on the ACT pack, and which have been delivered to >1000 young people [5.2]. Our Italian partner used the ACT pack in over 150 schools and youth centres throughout Italy, and in addition, in 2016-2017, >5000 pupils attending a photo exhibition on sexting participated in ACT pack activities [5.3].

More confident and knowledgeable teachers and informed training in the five countries

Teachers in Latvia reported that the ACT pack increased their confidence on a difficult topic, and that it was also accessible and easy-to-use [5.2] and our Italian partner facilitated the professional development of 1200 teachers by training them on sexual bullying and the ACT pack in the Lombardy Region in 2018. Further, the research report and ACT pack empowered the training organisations that were partners on the project to produce more informed in-house training and programmes [5.4-5.5]: *"This work [new training programme] has been informed by the whole body of work we did with ASBAE including the original focus groups & research themes."* [UK partner, 5.5]. In Bulgaria, our partner applied their new learning to develop a peer-led programme on the prevention of sexual abuse and bullying, and subsequently, 15 university students were trained to deliver the programme to >1000 children in schools [5.4].

Raising awareness of sexual bullying across Europe

The ACT pack was downloaded 500 times from the project website in the first nine months, with the website attracting 6534 visitors. Government agencies took an active interest in the ACT pack [e.g. 5.3-5.4], often distributing it widely [5.3, 5.4, 5.6]. For example, in 2015, it was distributed via the Slovenian government-funded platform *Safe on the Internet* (safe.si), which is used by schools and colleges nationally [5.6], and the Bulgarian Agency for Social Protection circulated the ACT pack to 27 regional and 143 municipal directorates for social assistance [5.4]. Also in 2015, the ACT pack was shared by partners via high level national and multi-country meetings in Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia [5.2, 5.4]. In the UK, the findings in our research report were raised in the House of Commons (January 2015) [5.7], with resulting media coverage [5.8] highlighting key messages from the research report and ACT pack, e.g. BBC World Service (1.3 million weekly listeners), Yorkshire Evening Post (circulation 27,000) article. The EC commented: *“The deliverables are good and have reached a wide audience of both youth and adults who could act as multipliers.”* [5.9].

New legislation in Italy and new governmental policy in the UK

Our project informed two new laws in Italy - n. 71 on cyberbullying in 2017 and n. 69 ‘Red Code’ on victims of gender-based violence in 2019 - following the presentation of our research findings and ACT pack to the Lombardy regional government (January 2017) and the Italian Parliament in Rome (February 2016) by our Italian partner [5.3]. Recognising the prevalence of technology-mediated bullying, the n. 71 law, for example, combats cyberbullying by requiring the Ministry of Education and schools to draft and revise an annual policy on the prevention and tackling of cyberbullying and website managers to speedily remove abusive online content. Our research also informed new policy on Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) in England and Wales. In 2017, Secretary of State for Education, and Minister for Women and Equalities, Justine Greening, announced her intention to put RSE on a statutory footing and to make Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) education statutory in the future [see 5.10]. This decision was informed by the 2016 report of the Women and Equalities Committee’s Inquiry into Sexual Harassment and Violence in Schools. Our evidence to this inquiry [see 5.10] recommended that schools provide PSHE classes to all pupils, including how to develop and maintain healthy, respectful relationships (and sexual relationships as part of RSE), which were recommendations subsequently made by the Women & Equalities Committee in their Inquiry Report (see recommendations 23, 25, 26 & 27 [5.10]). Further, our evidence about the normalisation of sexual bullying among young people was cited within the Committee’s Inquiry Report (paragraph 23, pp. 10-11) and is directly reflected in the Committee’s conclusion that young people are *“developing a sense that sexual harassment and sexual violence are acceptable behaviours and learning social norms that are carried through to adult life”* (paragraph 47, p.15) [see 5.10].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

5.1 (a) Milnes, K., Turner-Moore, T., Gough, B., Denison, J., Gātere, L., Haslam, C., Videva, D., Zajsek, T., & Zoppi, I. (2015). Sexual bullying in young people across five European countries: Research report for the ASBAE project. Prepared for the European Commission. Contains quotes from young people on the impact of participating in the focus groups; **p.18, section 3.2.1.1.**

<http://eprints.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/id/eprint/1435/>

(b) Quote is from the the Pepita's pilot workshop feedback form; **participants tab, Line 64, Column O.**

5.2 Correspondence with Resource Centre for Women (MARTA), Latvia (available on request).

5.3 Correspondence with Pepita Societa Cooperativa Sociale onlus, Italy (available on request).

5.4 Correspondence with Demetra Association, Bulgaria (available on request).

5.5 Correspondence with Leap Confronting Conflict, UK (available on request).

5.6 Correspondence with Institute for Enhancement and Development of Quality of Life (PAPILOT), Slovenia (available on request).

5.7 Hansard record of this debate, available here: [Bullying](#).

5.8 **(a)** The BBC World Service interview is available here: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/p02hbszh> interview runs 16.37 to 23.45; please register to access.

(b) Listenership figures for the BBC World Service for December 2014 (one month before the interview was aired) are available here: [BBC World Service - listening figures](#).

(c) The Yorkshire Evening Post article was reposted on the Liberal Democrats website and can be found here: [Minister backs Leeds Beckett research on sexual bullying](#).

(d) Circulation figures for the Yorkshire Evening Post for 2015 (which is when this article was featured) can be found here: [Yorkshire Post circulation trend UK 2003-2016](#).

5.9 Letter from European Commission dated 6th August 2015.

5.10 **(a)** The written evidence that we submitted is available here: <http://data.parliament.uk/WrittenEvidence/CommitteeEvidence.svc/EvidenceDocument/Women%20and%20Equalities/Sexual%20harassment%20and%20sexual%20violence%20in%20schools/written/33189.html>

(b) The Inquiry report can be accessed here (see paragraph 23, pp.10-11): <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201617/cmselect/cmwomeq/91/91.pdf>

(c) Justine Greening's statement on making RSE/PSHE statutory can be accessed here: <https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-statement/Commons/2017-03-01/HCWS509/>