

## Trauma-informed education settings: Responding to VAWG

### Key issues to consider for education leaders:

1. Do you feel confident that women and girls would feel safe and supported to disclose VAWG to their teacher/tutor/pastoral care should they want/need to?
2. Do you feel confident that teachers/tutors/pastoral care are adequately trained to support women and girls when they are subjected to violence and abuse?
3. Do you feel confident that teacher/tutor/pastoral care understand what it means to be trauma-informed when working with women and girls? Do they understand trauma responses, coping mechanisms, and trauma impacts from VAWG?
4. Do your senior leadership teams understand how to lead and manage their teams to respond to disclosures of VAWG in a trauma-informed way?
5. Is there evidence that your education setting pathologises and wrongly diagnoses women and girls with personality disorders, behavioural problems, attachment disorders, learning difficulties, ADHD, or Autism when they have disclosed trauma from VAWG?
6. Do you have a specific and ongoing training and resources programme to upskill and refresh all education professionals on all forms of VAWG, psychological trauma and support skills?
7. Do female education professionals feel safe in your setting? Are they treated with respect and compassion when they report sexism, misogyny, sexual assault, or abuse at work? Would they feel confident to report at all?
8. Have you explored the experiences of women and girls you are working with, to understand what happens when they disclose VAWG in your settings?
9. Are you confident that teachers/tutors/pastoral care ask the right questions, and use trauma-informed language when responding to a disclosure of VAWG? Have you explored this with education professionals?
10. Do your services provide information, strategies, and support for women and girls who may become triggered or traumatised by educational materials, modules, content or environments?
11. Are you confident that your teachers/tutors/pastoral care follow safeguarding protocols when they suspect a woman or girl is subjected to VAWG?
12. Do you feel confident that teachers/tutors/pastoral care will respond to and then protect women and girls who are subjected to VAWG within the education setting?
13. Does your setting employ trauma-informed language, policies and procedures when supporting women and girls subjected to VAWG?
14. Do your teachers/tutors/pastoral care take care not to refer women and girls into psychiatric services when they disclose VAWG?
15. Do your teachers/tutors/pastoral care take care not to victim-blame or pathologise women and girls who begin to struggle in education settings after being subjected to VAWG?

16. Has your education setting removed/banned all traumatic resources, productions, and content which show scenes of sexual and domestic violence as either education, or intervention?
17. Do you feel confident that your SRE modules, materials and resources are trauma-informed, anti-victim blaming and anti-misogyny?
18. Has your education setting implemented a policy which sets out adjustments and provisions for women and girls who have been subjected to VAWG, and may need extra support, extensions, rooms, or advice?
19. Has your education setting considered what is best for the woman or girl in their studies/ access to education whilst they are processing or being subjected to trauma?
20. Does your education setting provide information and advice to women and girls (or for young girls, their parent/guardian) about VAWG and trauma?

### Best practice example of responding to VAWG with a trauma-informed approach

A 17-year-old girl was recently sexually assaulted in her local park. She reported to the police when she heard that other young women had been assaulted. Since the assault, she has been missing classes and deadlines.

Instead of beginning performance/behavioural management, teaching and pastoral staff have a meeting to discuss their concerns, and how best to approach the girl without retraumatizing her. They create a possible list of adjustments/approaches they could implement to ensure the girl feels fully supported at school.

They offer her a meeting, which she is free to decline if she wishes, and offer her some written information about what will be discussed in the meeting. She is reassured that she is not in any trouble, and they are hoping to support her whilst she processes the trauma from the sexual assault. They explain that they are not going to ask her for any details about the assault, and they do not need a disclosure to help her. She is informed that she can have a trusted friend or family member with her.

The staff work together to offer a range of flexible options such as having some time off from her studies, changing her planned examinations, accessing further support, being given extensions on deadlines, being able to work from home for a period, being given a safe space in school, and being allocated a pastoral care team member to meet with her weekly to support her. The girl is offered a range of external specialist women's/sexual violence support services that she can pick from in her own time, if required. She is not referred to psychiatric services unless she chooses this herself.

Only staff members who need to know are involved in these conversations and the disclosure/information about the assault is not shared with anyone who does not need to know.