



WHITE RIBBON CAMPAIGN TOWNS PROGRAMME

The White Ribbon Towns Award is for Councils wishing to demonstrate their commitment to the aims of WRC: raising awareness, understanding and providing services in order to reduce the incidence of domestic violence and to provide the local community with increased support and understanding of this issue. Councils will be asked to meet certain criteria, depending on size, in order to hold the nationally recognised title of White Ribbon Town with the full support of WRC staff. There are a variety of initiatives available as part of this Award to local businesses and townspeople.

Raising awareness plays a huge part in changing the cultural and social norms which are recognised as being highly influential in shaping individual behaviour, including the use of violence. For example, cultural acceptance of violence as a normal method of resolving conflict or as a normal part of childrearing is a risk factor in all forms of interpersonal violence including DV. Interventions that challenge these norms can help reduce and prevent violent behaviour. Local councils working directly in the community are ideally placed to raise awareness and therefore save lives, increase the safety of women and children and enable friends and families to support their loved ones.

Community based initiatives involve a high level of ownership by local people creating social demand for change through awareness. There are a number of well documented evidence based approaches which have worked successfully in this way to change attitudes. The White Ribbon Town pilot in Bury has shown an increase in reporting and therefore more families receiving the help they need.

Raising awareness and understanding is not just about increasing the unacceptability of domestic violence. It can also act as a way of enabling greater support for survivors as they are most likely to disclose to family and friends, neighbours and employers than service providers. Increasing the general public's knowledge and understanding therefore will enhance the ability of these people to offer safe and appropriate support.

By encouraging work in local schools, communities can help to inform children and young people and address gender norms and attitudes towards violence before they become deeply ingrained. Children also confide in friends, so raising awareness in schools is not just about increasing levels of understanding the importance of healthy and respectful relationships, but creates an informed support network for those young people experiencing domestic abuse at home or in their personal relationships. For more information see the Schools Programme information.

White Ribbon Towns programme holds at its heart the importance of engaging with men. There are a number of prevention programmes which have highlighted the importance of engaging with men on this issue. Without encouraging men to challenge beliefs and attitudes and enlisting men as partners against gender-based violence we are only addressing half the solution. White Ribbon Towns aims to mobilise entire communities to end violence against women. It has been shown that taking a holistic approach can also impact on decreasing the number of violent incidents.

Early intervention is often missed leading to more costly interventions later. In human terms early intervention, the likelihood of which is increased by raising awareness, saves women and children from death, injury and living in misery. The benefits of dealing with DV cannot be overestimated; this is an issue which affects the whole of society and the ripple effects are long term and far reaching. DV is a factor in many areas including children on the at risk register, looked after children, youth offenders, bullying, disruptive classroom behaviour. It is not only the victim who is affected but the impact on children witnessing such abuse is huge. DV is also a feature in mental health, substance abusers, homelessness. 25% of all crime is DV. The cost to the UK economy is £6 billion every year, approx half of this is lost revenue due to time off due to hospitalisation or injury.



WHITE RIBBON TOWN OUTLINE CRITERIA

- Display domestic violence posters in all public areas, library, town hall, local services contact points etc
- Provide additional domestic violence information in at least three community languages or alternative formats, Braille, tape, video, large print.
- Include domestic violence information of relevance to survivors, children and perpetrators on the council website or make available through all relevant means.
- Put a domestic violence policy in place for all council staff experiencing domestic violence.
- Ensure all relevant staff at the council receive domestic violence training
- Appoint a specific individual to lead domestic violence awareness work and liaise with White Ribbon.
- Promote domestic violence work with regard to local businesses, with percentage targets for level of involvement regarding employers awareness training, becoming a White Ribbon Business and implementing the J9 initiative.
- Network housing, leisure services into DV services as well as community safety.
- Involve townspeople in decision making through holding local awareness events and inclusion in White Ribbon initiative.
- Engage with local sports clubs – overwhelming evidence for importance of including and engaging with men. See White Ribbon Sports Campaign

Local partnerships and networking of all service providers and relevant organisations, statutory, voluntary partners and local citizens to provide joined up thinking. This is an issue which impacts on a number of policy areas. Existing Local Authority activities can be documented to fulfil criteria.

BURY CASE STUDY

£8,000 raised for local women's services, local college involved, numerous awareness raising events, men's 'These heels were made for walking' sponsored walk, local sports clubs involved. Increased reporting of incidents in the area.

Two other programmes which can be included in White Ribbon Towns:

CORPORATE: For businesses of any size, Domestic Violence is increasingly seen as an important issue due to the huge impact on the health and well-being of employees as well as the affect on productivity. Becoming a White Ribbon employer gives businesses an Award to show that their organisation is a safe place for anyone experiencing Domestic Abuse of any kind. WRC will provide full support to employers to promote understanding and awareness of the issue, help to put DV policies in place and enable employers to fully support their staff and colleagues.

AMBASSADORS: The Ambassadors Programme encourages high profile men to show their support for the aims of White Ribbon Campaign. There are various levels of commitment dependant on the individual's ability to incorporate raising awareness into their daily working and personal life. Ambassadors are asked to wear the White Ribbon especially on November 25th and support others to do the same. There is also a Youth Ambassadors Programme.

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