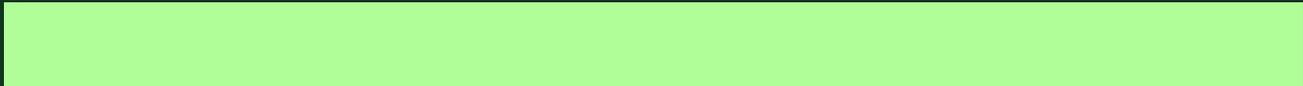


A series of case studies for
further education and skills
providers

**EDUCATION
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Addressing misogyny and violence against women and girls in further education and skills



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Introduction

Further education (FE) and skills providers have a unique and vital role in shaping safe, inclusive and respectful learning communities.

Across the sector, there is a growing recognition that misogyny, online harm and violence against women and girls are not isolated problems - they are cultural challenges that organisations can and must address through leadership, compassion and collective action.

This collection of case studies, was created to accompany the policy guidance document, *“Addressing misogyny and violence against women and girls in further education and skills”*. The policy guidance document provides practical steps, examples and frameworks to help every organisation foster connection, belonging, allyship and community - both online and offline.

This supporting document provides in-depth details about initiatives that FE and skills providers have worked to address misogyny and violence against women and girls.

- Collaboration with UK Feminista to create a whole-organisation approach to address misogyny and violence against women and girls by Birmingham Metropolitan College.
- The creation of the Ally programme, to equip staff to engage male students with problematic attitudes through sensitive, constructive conversations at Truro and Penwith College
- An example of training delivered to provide a practical model for creating a culture shift around equality and respect by York College
- An overview of the support that Yorkshire Learning Provider Network provides for members from the FE and skills sector to address misogyny and violence against women and girls.

These case studies demonstrate how consistency, communication and cultural ownership drive change.

Background and challenges

In 2021, Birmingham Metropolitan College (BMet) began a strategic partnership with UK Feminista to address violence against women and girls (VAWG) and combat sexism and misogyny within its further education (FE) community. Led by Kay Burton-Williams, Director of Student Experience, Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), and Senior Mental Health Lead (SMHL), this collaboration aimed to embed equality and respect across all aspects of college life.

National research, including UK Feminista's report "*It's Just Everywhere*" (2017): [Report-Its-just-everywhere.pdf](#), revealed that sexism and misogyny were pervasive within educational settings. BMet recognised that its students and staff were not immune to these societal issues and sought to move beyond reactive safeguarding measures towards a proactive, cultural transformation.

Exposure to sexism, misogyny, and harassment within educational environments has been shown to negatively impact mental health, contributing to increased anxiety, stress, fear, and reduced wellbeing among students and staff, highlighting the importance of addressing VAWG not only as a safeguarding issue but also as a key mental health and wellbeing priority.

Actions taken

1. Securing strategic buy-in

BMet recognised early that meaningful change required commitment from the top. Senior leadership endorsed a "whole-college approach" — ensuring that anti-sexism and equality work were not confined to isolated initiatives but embedded across all departments and student experiences. This approach was deliberately aligned with the college's Mental Health Strategy, Positive Behaviour policy, Ready, Respectful, Safe framework, and safeguarding processes, reflecting an understanding that sexism and misogyny can undermine wellbeing, safety, and behaviour. Aligning these strategies supported a consistent, preventative culture that promoted respect, protected mental health, and reinforced shared expectations across the college community.

2. Partnership with UK Feminista

UK Feminista provided:

- A structured action plan for implementation
- Ongoing coaching and advisory support

- Access to national benchmarking through annual surveys aligned with FE and secondary school data.

3. Evidence-led action

BMet adapted UK Feminista’s student and staff surveys to the FE context, maintaining national comparability while ensuring relevance to college life.

- Student surveys were embedded into the induction process, ensuring accessibility and participation
- Staff surveys are run annually each autumn, supporting a feedback loop for continuous improvement.

The survey findings were considered alongside existing evidence from student support services, safeguarding data, and mental health provision, enabling BMet to identify emerging wellbeing needs and ensure that responses to sexism and misogyny were informed by a holistic understanding of student and staff experiences.

4. Building capacity

The college invested in training and equipping staff to recognise and challenge misogyny and sexism. Staff development focused on:

- Understanding everyday sexism
- Intervening safely and effectively
- Supporting affected students with confidence and consistency.

By linking training to both safeguarding and mental health provision, BMet ensured that staff were not only equipped to respond to incidents but also to contribute proactively to a culture that promotes wellbeing, respect, and safety across the college.

5. Student empowerment and engagement

BMet established initiatives to empower student voice and create open dialogue:

- “Time to Talk” – Female empowerment programme (six-week series) encouraged self-confidence, leadership, and peer support among female students
- Domestic violence myth-busting sessions challenged misconceptions and encouraged collective responsibility for cultural change.

6. Embedding change

The partnership promoted a framework for sustainable change by integrating gender equality themes into enrichment activities, curriculum conversations, and student voice mechanisms. Misogyny prevention became a part of everyday college culture rather than a stand-alone project. By embedding these principles into daily practices, the college fostered an environment that prioritised both physical and psychological safety, supporting positive mental health and wellbeing for all students and staff.

Learnings and impact

Through the survey data and programme evaluation, BMet:

- Identified specific areas where sexism manifested within college interactions and culture
- Used insights to design targeted interventions and staff/student resources
- Strengthened the college's safeguarding and wellbeing strategy with a proactive lens on gender-based harm.

The initiative revealed both successes and ongoing challenges:

- Successes included stronger staff awareness, improved student engagement, and increased confidence in discussing gender equality
- Challenges involved sustaining momentum, managing competing priorities, and ensuring ongoing leadership commitment amid sector pressures.

A key learning was the importance of aligning and integrating college policies—including safeguarding, mental health, behaviour, and Ready, Respectful, Safe—to embed sustainable cultural change. The initiative also highlighted that achieving meaningful, long-term impact requires ongoing investment in training, resources, and staff capacity, recognising that embedding gender equality and wellbeing into everyday college life comes at a cost but is essential for creating a safe, inclusive, and supportive environment for all.

Looking ahead:

BMet continues its collaboration with UK Feminista, committing to:

- Annual data review and national benchmarking
- Further integration of equality and inclusion into college strategy
- Active participation in Women's Leadership Network roundtables, contributing to a national toolkit for tackling misogyny in FE.

In addition, BMet will embed staff and student voice within ongoing strategy review processes, using lived experience and emerging mental health and wellbeing needs to inform priorities, adapt approaches, and ensure that responses to sexism and misogyny remain relevant, inclusive, and support

Truro and Penwith College



Background and challenges

In 2022, Truro and Penwith College identified growing concerns about toxic masculinity and misogyny among students, with increasing issues linked to online influencers such as Andrew Tate. The college invited a local feminist organisation to speak, and whilst female learners benefitted and said they felt empowered, the male students said it added to their sense of feeling vilified for being male. Further discussion helped them understand that many lacked a positive sense of self and a sense of belonging.

Around this time, the college conducted a staff and student survey on healthy relationships. The results showed that some staff felt uncomfortable and unequipped to address misogynistic language. They often lacked opportunities to address these issues with students in the moment and felt that doing so in a public setting could risk alienating students rather than supporting constructive engagement.

Actions taken

The college recognised the need to support these students and shift attitudes positively, rather than relying solely on disciplinary measures. In 2023, Truro College created the Allies Programme, with 30 trained staff members strategically placed in areas with high male student populations. The initiative equips staff to engage male students with problematic attitudes through sensitive, constructive conversations. Staff received training on how to approach these discussions effectively.

Students are referred to the Allies Programme by staff who note language or behaviour that may reflect harmful or exclusionary attitudes, including misogynistic. Each student is matched with an appropriate ally, and support is tailored to individual needs—ranging from a single meeting to ongoing sessions throughout the year.

The role of the ally is to provide an open-door policy and a safe space for support. This allows students to challenge misconceptions and explore their thoughts. Allies work to understand whether attitudes are misogynistic and, if so, the underlying causes. If students express curiosity or support for manosphere influencers, allies guide them toward positive role models to counter extremist narratives.

While the Allies Programme targets students of concern, the college also delivers wider healthy relationships education to all students year-round. This includes tutorials featuring games, debates, and discussions on bystander behaviour.

Student voice plays a key role in the healthy relationships programme, ensuring male students feel heard and not vilified. One initiative involved creating a video where staff and students described a “modern man” in three words, reframing masculinity as strength combined with empathy and respect.

The college’s approach to addressing misogyny and gender-based violence empowers students to see that they can make a difference. The programme is proving successful, with 93% of surveyed students stating that healthy relationships education has helped them. The Student Services team attributes this success to the trust and support provided by senior management, enabling innovative projects to tackle these challenges.

Learnings and Impact

- Data is evaluated to identify emerging trends and themes, to enable the targeted recruitment of allies.
- 25% of referrals for the allies programmes were for students with high needs, compared to 4.1% of the overall college population. Additional allies were recruited with expertise in supporting SEND learners.
- Referrals were high initially but slowed down, so regular, timely communications are required to ensure this remains a priority issue and staff are actively supported to engage with this work.
- A promotional video was created to help staff and students understand the programme, which proved successful.
- Further training was introduced to ensure a consistent approach, including motivational interviewing techniques.
- A survey revealed that 30% of students would not seek support from parents or staff. With staff allies now established, the college plans to recruit student allies.

York College



Background and challenges

Sian Mantovani, Sociology Lecturer at York College, discusses the rising influence of the ‘manosphere’ and its impact on young people, particularly in relation to the promotion of hypermasculinity.

Actions taken

As part of the college’s equity, diversity, and inclusion strategy, Sian, in collaboration with colleague Jack Wilson has worked with college teams to address the harmful effects of hegemonic masculinity on students’ mental health and well-being. The initiative, informed by the concept of hegemonic masculinity, focuses on challenging deeply ingrained gender stereotypes and fostering safer, more inclusive environments. Sian has cited influence from “12 Dialogues” training from Men at Work CIC. Whilst Jack took inspiration from “Tackling misogyny and the Andrew Tate phenomenon” by Matt Pinkett.

Through staff training and engaging activities like creating ‘Man Rules’ and discussing gendered clothing, they create a platform for open discussion on the pressures faced by young men. They also raise awareness of the consequences of hypermasculinity, including mental health issues and violent behaviour, while avoiding negative terminology such as “toxic masculinity” to ensure a more constructive dialogue.

The initiative has received positive feedback, sparking staffroom discussions and encouraging further training. The team has now started working with progress coaches and safeguarding teams to develop bespoke materials for students, aiming to create a supportive culture that empowers young men to challenge harmful norms and behaviours.

Learnings and impact

- Challenging Gender Stereotypes Promotes Inclusion: Conversations about hegemonic masculinity help break down harmful norms.
- Mental Health Awareness is Crucial: Addressing the mental health impact of hypermasculinity fosters a safer environment.
- Inclusive, Intersectional Dialogue is Key: Training that respects diverse experiences enhances engagement and support for all students.

Background and challenges

Yorkshire Learning Providers (YLP) is a network of training organisations operating across Yorkshire, representing training providers, colleges, universities and schools.

As a not for profit, YLP is committed to using post-16 education as a positive vehicle for social improvement, mobility and change. They work on a range of social value themes that affect the further education (FE) and skills sector, their members and, importantly, learners and apprentices. Addressing equality in education is a core priority and theme for YLP and they use every opportunity raise awareness and scope for this work.

Actions taken

YLP has been actively addressing mental health issues linked to misogyny and violence against women and girls (VAWG) across the FE and skills sector through a range of interconnected workstreams. This work focuses on awareness, prevention, culture change, staff capability, and learner wellbeing, recognising the significant impact that misogyny, harmful online cultures and gender-based violence can have on mental health, safety and progression.

A key strand of their work has been the establishment and ongoing development of Women in FE forum, which provides a safe, supportive space for women across the sector to share experiences, raise concerns, and influence practice. This network plays an important role in addressing barriers to progression, promoting gender equality, celebrating women in the sector, and building peer support, all of which contribute positively to staff wellbeing and organisational culture.

YLP are currently undertaking research into misogyny within apprenticeship settings, exploring how harmful attitudes, online influences and workplace cultures can affect learners' mental health, confidence and sense of belonging. This research aims to help inform sector conversations and practical guidance on safeguarding, early intervention and inclusive practice. They have focused on this particular theme for research, co-funded by Occupational Awards Ltd, as it is evident to them that apprentices and apprenticeships are being left out of important research and action when addressing misogyny and violence against women and girls in education, at local, regional and national level. They want to enable equitable access to support or recognition of the challenges these women and girls face.

In response to the rise in involuntary celibate (INCEL) ideology and a recent INCEL-related incident, YLP has increased their focus on INCEL awareness, supporting providers to better understand the associated risks to both mental health and safety. This has included awareness-raising activity, discussions within safeguarding forums, and guidance on recognising early warning signs and responding appropriately.

Mental health has been embedded across the organisation's support offer through the delivery of an Organisational Mental Health Assessment and Action Plan, followed by action plan review and follow-up visits. These have enabled providers to reflect on culture, policies and practice, including how misogyny, bullying and harassment are addressed, and to take practical steps to strengthen staff and learner wellbeing.

Alongside this, YLP has delivered Mental Health Awareness Training, webinars, sector briefings, regular mental health blogs and Mental Health Awareness Day promotional activity. These resources have increasingly incorporated themes such as misogyny, consent, online harm, banter versus bullying, and respectful relationships. The resources are to help staff feel more confident in challenging harmful behaviour and supporting those affected.

Specific thematic work has included:

- Exploring different levels of consent and how these should be understood and taught within education and training settings
- Addressing the distinction between “banter” and bullying, particularly where gender-based harassment is normalised
- Engagement with wider cultural conversations such as Femosphere and the Soft Girl Revolution, to help staff understand online influences affecting young people's attitudes, identity and mental health.

YLP has also hosted and contributed to events such as “Addressing Misogyny in Education” sessions, which focus on building connections across the sector, sharing knowledge and resources, and strengthening safeguarding responses. Their safeguarding forum continues to be a key space for sharing emerging themes, risks and good practice related to VAWG and mental health.

YLP has engaged in the ‘lads at the back’ campaign, through the West Yorkshire Boys Impact Hub, that raises awareness of challenges boys face in education, the negative connotation they receive from society and boosting male champions and advocates across FE to help address misogyny narratives and bring equality to settings.

YLP demonstrates a whole-organisational commitment to addressing misogyny and violence against women and girls in FE and skills. Alex Miles, Managing Director, is the FE representative on the West Yorkshire violence reduction partnership with a focus on addressing violence against women and girls and FE and skills representative on the West Yorkshire serious violence executive group.

Alex has written a mental health for apprentices blog, for YLN members, and has featured on the ETF mental health resources podcast series, sharing approaches for supporting mental health for apprentices particularly linked to misogyny and inappropriate use of language in the workplace.

Impact

Through this work, YLP has seen increased awareness and confidence among FE and skills providers in addressing misogyny and related mental health issues. Providers report improved conversations around consent, behaviour and online influence, stronger safeguarding responses, and greater engagement with staff wellbeing and inclusion. The Women's Network in particular, has strengthened peer support and visibility of women's experiences, contributing to a more open and supportive culture. Many providers are reporting that they are now asking the right questions, opening dialogue about their female staff and apprentices in the workplace, and feeling more confident to address poor practice if and when they see it.

"At Luminate Education Group part of our educational character is to ensure we strive to support colleagues and learners as we transform Lives. We feel this collaboration has strengthened our commitment to supporting colleagues, sharing good practice and working together to drive meaningful change within the sector, creating inclusive spaces where all women in FE can thrive." **Luminate Education Group**

Thank you

157-197 Buckingham Palace Road,
London SW1W 9SP

020 3740 8280
enquiries@etfoundation.co.uk
etfoundation.co.uk

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