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- Thank you all for our inviting us back to the CoSLA Executive. We were here last year with two other VAV members (they say “Hi!”) and had a great time sharing a presentation with you. We received a lot of valuable feedback and we hope that happens again today!
- We’ve been really busy! A lot has happened in the last year with VAV, so we’re going to start today with an update of the things we’ve done...

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Firstly, our Successes...

- By far our biggest success has been our positive relationship with Ministers and CoSLA, mainly because this has allowed a lot of other successes to happen:
 - We’ve helped shape domestic abuse policy in Scotland through great meetings with Nicola Sturgeon and other Ministers. We made arguments for changes through our extensive fact-finding on what does and doesn’t work for CYP experiencing domestic abuse.
 - We’ve also had a couple of sessions with Harry McGuigan where we’ve learned a lot from each other 😊
 - The two-way, direct dialogue at these meetings has been very important; allows equal say and feedback from each other.
- We’ve had several funding successes including:
 - We secured Scottish Government funding for specialist domestic abuse children’s workers until March 2012
 - We met with the Big Lottery and advised them how to spend their funding. As a result they decided to fund the roll-out of CEDAR – a groupwork programme for children by affected domestic abuse and their mums. 12 local authorities have put in applications!
- We’ve developed many national resources such as -
 - A national online campaign called ‘Feel like you’re living in a war-zone’ which asked young people to speak to a trusted adult if they were going through domestic abuse.
 - We also developed a national website on domestic abuse called Safehub which has information for young people.

Neither of these two resources would have been funded if it wasn’t for our direct access to Ministers and CoSLA which allowed us to argue the real need for more awareness and better access to support for young people.

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- There have been challenges of course, for example
 - Though there have been areas of progress in Scotland around domestic abuse such as support workers, there has been lots of frustration due to areas where there has been little change:
 - Housing
 - Safe Contact
 - Communication between VAV and other groups/adults (not Ministers/CoSLA)
 - Difficulty keeping it regular
 - Dealing with stereotypes about young people (e.g. thinking we're not capable)
 - Problems shifting through "Government speak" and trying find a common language

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But it has been a remarkable journey for each on of us:

- We received the Young Scot Diversity and Citizenship award
- Being in VAV has been good for personal growth for our members:
 - Confidence growth
 - Teamwork skills
 - Peer support
- After all our successes and the lessons we have learned, we're sad to say we're ending. But we're ending with a Big Bang – the event on Tuesday that you're all invited to – and we're launching two big things there: the VAV manifesto which laura will talk about and a DVD to pave the way for future involvement of local young people in work like ours.

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So, why VAV produced this survey manifesto - There are only eight of us in VAV and we know we can't speak on behalf of all children and young people, especially if they want to speak for themselves. We needed to find a way to make their voices heard directly by adults in power. Also, our experience is important, but as time goes on our experiences with services are less recent. These CYP have fresh experiences, and can let us know what is working just now and what isn't.

This manifesto gives us new priorities to work towards that CYP across Scotland have specified as what needs the most change. The delivery plan has ended, and as Scot said there are frustrations about progress – there is still a huge amount of work to be done. We felt there needed to be a new set of priorities influenced by CYP. It is the first survey of its kind because we did not just ask about young people's attitudes to domestic abuse. We asked them what needs to change in Scotland so that we can become better at tackling domestic abuse.

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- Over 600 YP completed the survey. Most of them were aged 13-15.
- 13% had experience of domestic abuse – this is a good start as they are a very hard-to-reach group but we need to hear from more.
- 28% would accept one-off violence if it happened in their own relationship
- 11% would accept forced sex
- 1 in 10 would not tell anyone, those with experience 1 in 5

With the majority of CYP answering this survey being aged 13-15, I'm sure you'll agree with me that these are some shocking stats.

4 priorities were chosen as the most important to CYP. Almost 50% of the young people who answered the survey chose Help & Support as their main area for change. They then chose the remaining three areas, Justice System, Schools and Housing.

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As I said, Help and Support was unsurprisingly the most important area to all young people. Young people's top priorities for this area was for more accessible AND EXPERT support in all areas of Scotland – they asked for more help closer to home.

Young people's second priority was for more groupwork programmes like the CEDAR programme which was set up in Forth Valley, Edinburgh and Fife. We ask elected members to make sure these two recommendations become a reality in your local areas.

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After Help and Support, young people were most likely to choose the Justice System and Courts as an area for change. From our survey we have found that police listening to young people's side of the story at incidents is the most essential issue for them. This contrasts with the views of many adult professionals who believe it is too distressing for children to speak to the police. For VAV, we believe passionately that all police officers should have training on how to listen to children so their views are taken on board and their needs are understood quicker.

Young people's second priority was for good communication between the police and other agencies to ensure support is available immediately for children (as soon as an incident happens). We know of good multi-agency approaches in Glasgow linked to the DA court such as the MARAC, the specialist ASSIST Service and the Strathclyde Police Domestic Abuse Task Force. These help children right from an incident and respect their right to confidentiality. We ask you to make sure that these sort of approaches are used in all parts of Scotland.

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In relation to schools, young people's top priority was to be taught about domestic abuse. Although almost half of the young people had received at least one lesson on domestic abuse in school, most agreed it wasn't enough. It was very interesting that young people who thought their lesson about domestic abuse was useful were more likely to say they would go to someone at school for help.

Young people's second priority was for more teacher training on domestic abuse. We think that there should be mandatory training for professionals in schools around domestic abuse which is consistent throughout their careers, not just a one-off. The training should be given to as many teachers as possible, not just guidance teachers or the child protection person as children need a choice as to who they can speak to. We ask you to make DA lessons and training a priority in your area.

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For housing, young people's top priority was that women and children should be able to stay safely in their own home with the abuser gone. We think there is a need for more research asking children and young people if this is possible as it wasn't for any of VAV.

Their second priority was to make sure that there are more and better refuges and to bring them up to standard so no family should have to share a bathroom or kitchen. We know this costs money, but the difference it can make having a safe and good quality space to live really is invaluable. We ask you to put every effort into making sure refuges are up to 20th Century standards.

These voices in the survey are not just stats, these are people's journeys and their journeys are not easy. VAV has spoken to many CYP who've been through DA. One girl I spoke to recently told me how she had disclosed what her dad was doing to a teacher. The teacher actually called in her dad, and sat them down together to confront each of them. Of course he denied everything so she sent them away together. She was actually sent away with the person she had asked for help to escape, with no thought to the repercussions. This young people and the hundreds of others in our survey know what needs to change and we ask you as elected members to make sure these changes happen. There are small changes and big changes but each change will save lives.

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- I want to also highlight some journeys.
 - Justice: Talk about amazing young girl (she already had a disability to deal with) who went through the court process with ASSIST support
 - She was scared, but she had great support from an ASSIST support worker and from her Mum
 - This contrasts against a story from another young girl who talked about hanging around in the streets because of what was going on at home. When the police stopped her, she told them what was going on and they thought she was just making trouble.
- There are lots of young experts across Scotland who want their voices heard and who want to shape the future.
 - Your local authority young people are Young Experts; same as VAV members, but earlier in the process.
 - There is a “NEED” for them – You need to hear their voices so you know what changes should be made. You need their expert opinions and views to really make a difference in their lives, as politicians would say: to prove that you are improving outcomes. If you are going to spend money on services, you need to be sure that they are of good quality. That you are not just patching up the problem so you need to spend more money later on.
 - This supports a “Spend to Save Strategy”. A local-VAV would ultimately be a mechanism to see policies and strategies that are not just happening, but WORKING.
 - A local VAV would act as a “conduit” of between children in your area who’ve been through domestic abuse and the people in charge in your local authority – YOU and Community Planning Partnerships! We know that some children and young people are involved in consultation work locally but we feel just being consulted is not enough. A local VAV would be about young people representing themselves directly to you as equal partners, not having their views filtered through adult agendas
 - They will advise you on what change needs to happen from the experts – the CYP in your local authority – and following action, whether changes are working. They can fact-find locally, do local surveys and help develop local projects.
 - If there’s another national VAV like us, it would coach local VAVs and support them with issues, receive feedback from local authority CYP to support their own arguments, and put pressure on national structures according to local VAV priorities.

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- For now though, because we don't know our future, we have created a DVD called 'One Voice at a Time' which we are launching at the Big Bang event on Tuesday. We hope it will inspire other CYP to get involved with participation and we hope it will inspire people in power to believe that working with children and young people really works. We want its information and advice will be used by local VAVs to tackle domestic abuse in your areas so we need to get it out there.
- This is actually our last political engagement in VAV's current form, so we're honoured that we've been given so much time here to talk to the whole of Scotland.
- We have a few big questions for you, but if you have any questions now...?