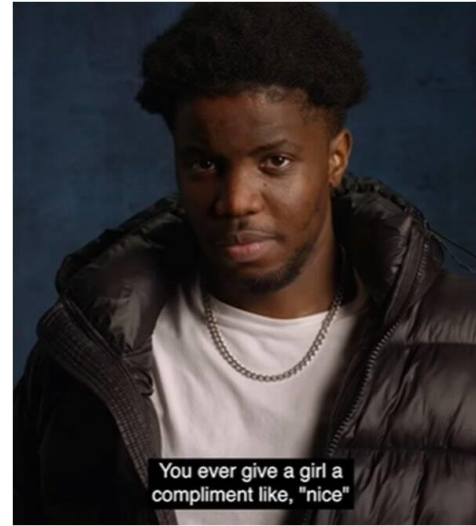


# Engaging men and boys in preventing gender-based violence

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Tackling GBV Conference | 30<sup>th</sup> Mar 2023

# A shifting landscape

- In recent years, we have seen a substantial increase in discussions about men's role in both the problem, and the solution.
- However, are these conversations starting to recede?
- We are also witnessing a backlash in response.



# The need for prevention

- Everyone seems to agree that prevention is a vital part of efforts to tackle gender-based violence.
- Yet serious prevention work remains under-developed in the UK.
- Policymakers appear more interested in after-the-fact, punitive responses.



# Evidence on prevention

- Research on effective prevention work highlights some common key factors:
  - Starting from a young age, and across the life-course.
  - Holistic and multi-level – within organisations and across society (i.e. structures, cultures, individuals).
  - Fostering ongoing learning, dialogue and reflection.
  - Gender-transformative.
- This might sound like a lot – but GBV costs us far more.

# A gender-transformative approach

- Actively addressing, and working to change, the gendered norms and inequalities which lie at the roots of violence and abuse.
- We can't hope to prevent violence if we're not able to talk about gender.
- These issues are deep-rooted and complex – which is why initiatives need to be in-depth and ongoing.



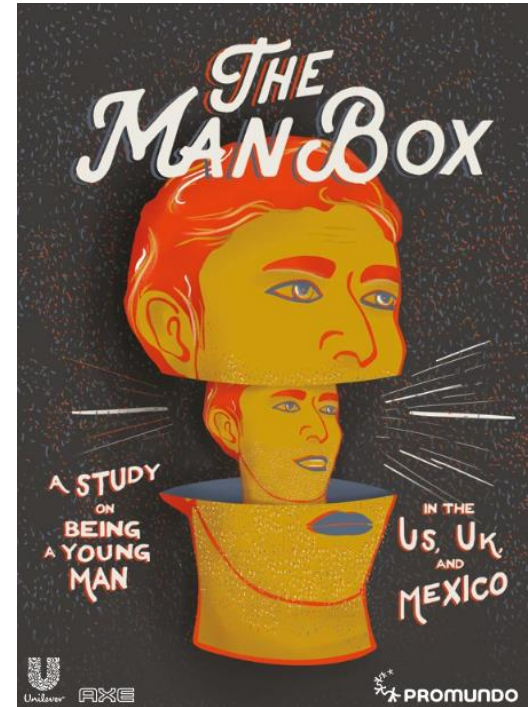
# Engaging men and boys

- Engaging with men is a crucial part of such efforts.
- Most violence and abuse in society is perpetrated by men – so we have a vital positive role to play in speaking out, in the different spheres of our lives.
- Focusing on the behaviour of victim-survivors does not move us closer to preventing the problem.



# What does it mean to be a man?

- Violence and abuse is not inevitable. It is shaped by how society defines 'being a man', i.e. 'masculinity' ...
  - Be self-sufficient.
  - Act tough.
  - Look good.
  - Stick to rigid gender roles.
  - Be heterosexual and homophobic.
  - Display sexual prowess.
  - Be prepared to use violence.



# Masculinity and violence

- Violence and abuse is frequently rooted in attempts to achieve a sense of (masculine) power and control.
- It is shaped by beliefs about what is expected of men, what we are entitled to – and insecurities about our inability to live up to these things.
- These patriarchal expectations hold men and boys ourselves back in a range of ways – from our wellbeing to relationships.





# Dealing with backlash

- Some people seek to exploit the anxieties many men and boys feel, and push back the steps forward that have been made.
- Scapegoating women and feminism will not help to solve men's problems.
- Need to work through defensiveness – help men and boys to build critical consciousness about gender and how it relates to their lives.

## Sex education review announced after MPs raise concerns

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Relationships, Sex and Health Education is compulsory in all schools

# Work with men and boys

- There are examples of promising practice in the UK, but prevention remains under-prioritised.
- It is vital to collaborate with, and be accountable to, women's organisations and victim-survivors.
- We are living in times of crisis – there are opportunities for change, but also backlash. We can't let gender equality slip 'off the agenda'.



# Conclusion

- Preventing gender-based violence requires active involvement from all of us – especially men and boys.
- This will help us to address multiple problems whose root causes are shared in gender inequality.
- Fostering care and connectedness in men's lives reduces the viability of violence and abuse as an option.
- Need to build on positive examples of where this is already happening.



# Thank you for listening!

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