

Written evidence submitted by Simran Kaur Sanghera (BYC057)

1. Groups of people affected

I believe that anyone from the age of 11 can be affected by body image, thanks to the media and peer pressure. They have become drawn to extremely uniform and impossible standards of beauty.

TV, billboards, magazines etc. mean that they see 'beautiful people' all the time, making exceptional good looks seem real, normal and attainable. Although what they do not realise is that these 'attractive people' are not what they seem.

Standards of beauty have in fact become harder and harder to attain, particularly for women. According to the Girls Attitude Survey 2016, over 1,600 girls aged 11-21 were asked about body confidence and "47% of girls aged 11-21 say the way they look holds them back". This could mean that they could not be prospering in their academic education or be able to live their own life just because of how they and others see them. Also: "69% of girls aged 7-21 feel like they are not good enough", this can bring on symptoms of mental illnesses of Bulimia and Anorexia, trying to be "perfect".

It is said that body image is sometimes mostly related to girls, although what they do not understand is that boys feel peer-pressured too.

In a consultation carried out in 2015 - 2016 in relation to our campaign Be Unique, a body image and self esteem campaign, some boys were asked to comment on how they thought they looked and here are some comments from the 26 males (**varied in ages**) that took part:

- "Happy, though I do not believe myself to be fit in any way cos I am super skinny. I do sometimes feel insecure about it in places of stereotypical masculinity (P.E Lessons)"
- "I am fine with my body and happy about the way I look"
- "I'm chubby, I'm ugly"
- "It's Fine"
- "I dislike my body to be honest. I have a double chin, rolls of fat."

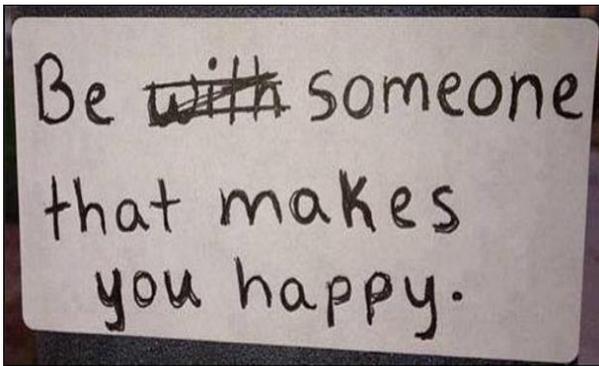
As you can see the results are very varied and In my opinion I think that body insecurity has happened due to stereotyping Boys and Girls into categories in which society pushes them to belong in, this can also really be a problem for transgender or any other kind or sexuality teens who are just suffering from all of this hate. They can be called terrible names which can impact their lives negatively a lot. Some people can be peer - pressured as well, i think this is not right and everyone has the right to control over their own life.

Current campaigns, such as our Be Unique Campaign, I believe are helping a lot. Schools and other services need to be given that extra push so that they can help impact these campaigns on Teens and show that they are not alone, during that dark time.

2. The internet, social media and messaging

“Girls are growing up hating their bodies because of the pictures that are shown in the media.”
(Girl aged 17–21) - Girls Attitude Survey 2016

I do think nowadays more positive messages about “loving yourself” come up more in the media now than ever before, this could be because more people know what the effects of poor body image are and in fact wanting to help other people into showing how special they are. Here is an example:



Although there is still more to be done, there needs to be more love for the LGBT community and for other ethnicities as well, so they do not feel ashamed for how they are. I have not seen one social media app trying to tackle poor body image that well enough to make an impact. I think what they should do is take down accounts promoting poor body image and put up brand new ones promoting self love and how it is ok to be unique! The Government does not have a big uphold on the certain social media sites which are promoting poor body image. An idea which I have, which I believe the Government should take into consideration is to create any other media or public way to promote good body image, high self esteem and how it is good to be unique, then through the power social media has on our lives everyone will be shown it and hopefully will be impacted in a good way, and really leave a mark in society, where it will be remembered. I also don't think enough is being done to pave the way for women, especially those from ethnic minorities, this is why I think this project/idea will be a good way to empower women and It is important that women are seen as equals and not as men's sexual objects (When women are portrayed as 'sex objects' it makes girls feel disempowered 13–21 - 61% agree - Girls Attitude Survey). Gender and racial equality

3. Education

Usually we get taught about body image in PSHCE lessons. I asked some of my peers in my learning setting about what they thought about how we are taught about body image, and here are one of their opinions:

“It’s rubbish because we get taught to love ourselves but then we get told that if we look a certain way it is “unhealthy”. Also schools do not handle bullying as well as they can so people get picked on for what they look like and who they want to be, and school doesn’t do too great of a job of promoting good body image”.

Although this is only 1 opinion, of one school, in one area, I believe education needs to promote healthier eating and positive body image in a more gentler way to help connect and not make feel bad those with mental health and body problems.

If you take into example Health and Social studies, you get to learn about your body and how you can take care of it, in a number of ways. In my opinion these lessons should be implicated into PSHCE lessons so we can learn more about body image over a longer period of than instead of 1 hour!

In a consultation carried out in 2015 - 2016 in relation to our campaign Be Unique, a body image and self esteem campaign, we asked teenagers (78) what they learn about body image already and how they want to learn about it more in the future, Here are some of the opinions from both genders, and just remember these are just some opinions from one area in the region!

What does your school or college do to address body image?

- Nothing x 21 - They don’t do anything x 5
- Talk about it in general studies but not much, they try to avoid it
- Counselling, mentor meetings, form time
- In general studies but not a lot, I think they try to avoid it.
- Not much really, talks about not over eating but they don’t address other unhealthy diets
- I wouldn’t know , but I presume nurses come in
- Tell us about eating disorder problems
- I don’t know x 6
- They don’t really x 3
- Assembly x 2

As you can see these results are varied a lot, also we asked:

How would you like your school/college to address body image issues?

- Advice and someone you can turn to x 2
- Help people and give them more confidence
- Discuss body image more often, show more support (one to one)
- Not really through school- too personal
- Offer support to peers/students, have group sessions to talk about it. More posters around school about being positive
- Maybe give more talks on positive body image
- Tell people everyone is different
- Talk more about it and offer support to those who need it

- Spend more time on it x 4

It is important that adults know what is going through young people's mind, so they can help them to be brave with whatever they think about themselves, this is why i think that pupils should be taught clearly by someone who knows plenty about body image and mental health problems associated with it.

Teens from other ethnicity backgrounds should be able to be proud of who they are without all of this hate, what they need to realise that their religion is special and helps build up our cultural society today! In other words, they are unique! Most schools should emphasise that it doesn't matter what colour skin you are at all!

If you get the education and help required at a young age it can help a lot in the future, every child has the right to feel good about themselves.

In conclusion what message came through loud and clear is one that we are all affected by negative body image in one way or another regardless of age, sex, ethnicity or culture. Social media and 'Celebrity Mags' contribute towards feelings of negativity when images of 'perfection' are constantly thrust at young people. We need to do something so that people will not only be impacted in school but also in public areas as well.

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