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Child and Family Agency

**DSGBV**

# **Executive Summary:** ***Research Evaluation of the Manuela Sexual Violence Prevention Programme for Secondary School Students***

**Final Report, May 2020**

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## Executive Summary

This report describes and interprets the findings of the independent research evaluation of the large scale piloting of the Manuela Programme that was rolled out in four regions across Ireland from 2018 to 2020. The research team was led by Dr Pádraig MacNeela and Ms Maureen D'Eath at the School of Psychology, NUI Galway. It was commissioned by the Tusla Child & Family Agency programme on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence following a tendering process. The research was an integral part of the Manuela Project co-funded by the Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme of the European Union. It presents an analysis of the effectiveness, acceptability, and sustainability of the Manuela Programme using a mixed methods quantitative and qualitative research design.

The programme is relevant to a number of important developments in Irish society and educational provision that have come to the fore in recent years. There has been a growing recognition of gender equality and sexuality, coming not simply from positive developments in equality-related legislation and policy making but also from extensive media coverage of high profile trials, increased public awareness of sexual violence and harassment.

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment review of Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE) in primary and post-primary schools involved extensive consultation of students, parents, teachers, and stakeholder organisations. It is set to transform the coverage in RSE of topics such as consent and sexual violence, and to shift the focus to outcomes such as empowerment, self-assertion, peer support, and personal confidence in negotiating relationships and intimacy. Initiatives such as the Manuela Programme therefore have the potential to contribute to an identified gap in provision, although a number of questions arise in relation to resourcing, sustainability, the involvement of teachers, provision of training, and partnerships with statutory agencies and NGOs.

## *The Manuela Programme*

The Manuela Programme is named to honour Ms Manuela Riedo, a 17 year old Swiss student who was raped and murdered in Galway City in October 2007. The programme is the culminating action of the Manuela Riedo Foundation Ireland, which was founded in Galway in 2009 in Manuela's memory. It is an education programme delivered over 12 hours that focuses on attitudes, awareness, critical thinking, and skills relevant to sexual violence prevention and the promotion of active consent among 15 to 17 year olds. It is designed to be delivered in six two-hour group sessions. It is predominantly delivered in traditional school settings, but is also suitable for alternative and other community-based settings.

This report focuses on its delivery in secondary schools within timetabled teaching hours. The manual promotes a delivery style based on empowering, facilitative methods to support young people's understanding of negative and positive aspects of sexual health, and to promote confidence and practical skills in exercising agency over intimacy. The theoretical basis to the programme is derived from the Theory of Reasoned Action (Ajzen, 2014), social norms (Berkowitz, 2002) and scripting theory (Simon & Gagnon, 2002). The content builds on the teaching and education resources developed by Rape Crisis Centre education programmes across Ireland. The programme theory, content, and delivery strategies were consolidated in 2016 through a collaboration of the Manuela Riedo Foundation Ireland, the 16 Rape Crisis Centres, and Rape Crisis Network Ireland, facilitated by Dr Sue Redmond.

## The Manuela Project

**May  
2020**

Research Evaluation of The Manuela Sexual Violence Prevention Programme for Secondary School Students is completed by the School of Psychology, National University of Ireland, Galway. **707** students provided detailed pre and post intervention surveys. **134** young people's focus groups, interviews with **27** education and project personnel finds evidence that the programme is effective with significant positive changes in the scores of programme participants on almost all of the measures used.

**Oct  
2018**

**October 2018**

The evaluation research process begins. The Manuela Project contributes to the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment Review of Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE) in primary and post-primary schools.

**Mar  
2020**

**March 2020** - The Manuela Project ends:

- **2,701** people (52% female - 48% male, aged 14-18 years) participated
- **70** educational centres (63 secondary schools, 7 youth reach centres) took part
- **61** teacher/facilitators trained in the delivery of the programme

**2016**

**2016**

Tusla's Domestic, Sexual, and Gender Based Violence (DSGBV) team with sectoral support secures EU funding for an extended pilot roll-out and evaluation to Transition Year students in Irish post primary schools and in some out of school settings. The overall aim is to target students to assess the evidence for programme impact and to support capacity in the education sector for this work.

**Sept  
2017**

**September 2017**

The project commences delivery in schools in **4 geographical areas** by project workers in partnership with teachers and youth reach. The Project partners comprised Tusla and Galway Rape Crisis Centre as beneficial partners with Dublin, Kerry and Wexford Rape Crisis Centres as associate partners. The Project is advised by a group of key stakeholders drawn from HSE, Rape Crisis Centres, Rape Crisis Network Ireland, Tusla, the Department of Education and Skills, and the Department of Justice and Equality.

**2015**

**2015**

The Manuela Programme an interactive, facilitated sexual violence prevention education programme is developed through collaboration, facilitated by Dr Sue Redmond, of the Manuela Riedo Foundation Ireland, and 16 Rape Crisis Centres, and Rape Crisis Network Ireland.

**2009**

**2009**

The Manuela Riedo foundation Ireland is set up to provide funding to professional agencies working in the areas of Prevention, Awareness, Education and Healing of sexual assault and rape.

**2007**

Manuela Riedo, a Swiss Student is raped and murdered in Galway.

## ***Extended Pilot Roll-Out***

In 2016, Tusla's Domestic, Sexual, and Gender Based Violence (DSGBV) Programme successfully secured funding to conduct an extended pilot roll-out and evaluation of the Manuela Programme. The overall aim of the Manuela Project was to target students in Transition Year in Irish post primary schools and in some out of school settings to assess the evidence for programme impact and to support capacity in the education sector for this work. The Project partners comprised Tusla and four Rape Crisis Centres. Galway Rape Crisis Centre was a beneficial partner with Dublin, Kerry and Wexford Rape Crisis Centres as associate partners.

Four project workers were recruited on a half-time basis to support the piloting, hosted by the Rape Crisis Centres in Galway, Dublin, Kerry and Wexford. Coordination was provided by the Galway Rape Crisis Centre. The project workers engaged with schools and with alternative education settings to recruit students to participate in the programme. The project manager for the programme was based in Tusla. The programme plan was to involve teachers directly in delivery in order to build capacity within schools, thereby enhancing the sustainability of the programme beyond the pilot phase. Teachers were supported to co-facilitate the Manuela Programme initially to build their skill in independent programme facilitation. This was complemented by facilitator training on the content, facilitation skills, and receiving disclosures. The pilot project commenced in September 2017 and concluded in March 2020. During this time the Manuela Programme was delivered to 2,701 young people in 63 schools and 8 alternative education settings across 10 counties.

The Manuela Programme was advised by a group of key stakeholders drawn from Tusla, HSE, Rape Crisis Centres, Rape Crisis Network Ireland, the Department of Education and Skills, and the Department of Justice and Equality. It also contributed submissions to the Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE) review, facilitated by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA).

## ***Research Team and Methodology***

The evaluation team was led by Dr Pádraig MacNeela and Ms Maureen D'Eath, and comprised Dr Siobhán O'Higgins, Dr Chris Noone, Dr Lorraine Burke, and Ms Laura Tierney. Ms D'Eath coordinated and led the delivery of the research evaluation strategy. Ethical approval was granted by Tusla Research Ethics Committee. The independent evaluation was supported by a Research Steering Group and further supported by the key stakeholders on the Manuela Project Advisory Group.

The learning outcomes identified in the programme manual were developed into testable research questions to focus the evaluation. The research strategies were used to assess if the programme was effective in reducing negative attitudes that contribute to a culture of perpetrating and tolerating sexual misconduct and violence, while increasing positive attitudes aligned with a respectful and mutual approach to engaging in active consent for intimacy. The evaluation also sought to assess the acceptability and sustainability of the programme by exploring the programme process and delivery systems. A review of the RSE policy of ten schools, five of which had participated in the Manuela Programme was conducted to provide further context for the evaluation.

The research evaluation used a mixed methods research design comprising a quantitative Pre and Post Programme survey based on standardised measurement tools concerning:

- Sexual consent self-efficacy and attitudes.
- Behavioural intentions for using verbal and passive consent.
- Rape myths.
- Beliefs about heterosexual scripts, and
- Attitudes to pornography and sexting.

A total of 707 of the students who participated in the Manuela Programme were included in the research evaluation (52% male, 47% female, 1% non-binary gender identification; over 90% aged 15-16 years). These students were recruited from 40 schools and one alternative education setting. All the students completed the Pre and Post Programme survey, before the first session and at the end of the sixth and final session. A waitlist control design was employed to compare the effects of the intervention, with 626 students taking part in the Manuela Programme between the two surveys and 81 students in a control group which received the Manuela Programme after completion of the Post Programme survey.

Qualitative research strategies were used to follow up on the experience of taking part in the programme, and also to explore the views of stakeholders drawn from subject experts and teachers. A total of 134 students took part in one of thirteen participatory focus groups, including one with a Youthreach group. Eleven teachers, one chaplain, and one school principal were interviewed for the evaluation. Interviews and focus groups were held with project workers and members of the Project Advisory Group.

## ***Pre and Post Programme Survey Findings***

The analysis of Pre and Post Programme quantitative survey responses revealed significant positive changes that were specific to the Manuela Programme participants. While control group responses did not change over the six week period, there were significant changes in



the scores of programme participants on almost all of the measures used. The greatest changes were in consent preparedness (which relates to self-efficacy and peer perceptions regarding consent) and rape myth endorsement, which relate to the enhancement of positive development and reduction in negative beliefs addressed in the programme objectives.

The changes noted in the programme participants are illustrated below and also serve to provide a useful baseline figure on the attitudes, beliefs, and confidence of young people more generally. For example, self-appraisal of self-efficacy in consent began at a relatively low baseline. The figures below demonstrate the percentage of programme participants who ‘strongly agreed’ with consent preparedness statements before and after the intervention:

	Female		Male	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
<b>I have all skills to deal with sexual consent</b>	14	58	26	57
<b>I am well informed about consent</b>	22	80	24	67

While rising to percentages ranging from 57-80% on these items after the programme, the baseline prior to intervention was only 14-26%, suggesting relatively low confidence in relation to knowledge and skills. Responses to other sections of the questionnaire corroborate this finding, with only 31% of females and 32% of males ‘moderately / strongly agreeing’ on the Pre Programme survey that they were confident asking for consent from a new partner. This figure rose by 16% for females in the Post Programme survey, but only by 5% for males. Item-level changes on intentions to engage in verbal consent were more notable for female participants than for males, as illustrated in the percentages of participants who ‘strongly agreed’ with the items below:

	Female		Male	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
<b>I would ask my partner if they are interested in engaging in intimacy</b>	24	46	44	49
<b>I would talk about it with my partner</b>	40	53	41	44

There were substantial increases in females’ agreement they would engage in these assertive, verbal strategies, but again the Pre Programme percentages were rather low (24-40%). The

changes in male responses were less evident. Overall, while there was a small but significant increase in intentions to engage in verbal consent, there was no significant decline in the intention to use passive consent strategies.

Traditional heterosexual scripts help to perpetuate gendered roles in relationships such as male entitlement and inequality. There was a significant decrease in endorsement of these attitudes for programme participants, as illustrated in the percentage of males and females who ‘somewhat / strongly agreed’ with the items below:

	Female		Male	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
<b>It’s only natural for guys to make advances on someone who he finds attractive</b>	41	27	44	35
<b>Most guys do not want to be “just friends” with a girl</b>	18	13	32	20

In each case the percentage endorsing these sentiments dropped by between 5-14% after the programme. The smallest reduction can be seen in females’ belief about guys not wanting to be just friends, but only 18% agreed with this idea before the intervention. However almost one-third of male students agreed with this idea before taking part in the programme, and over four in ten agreed with the belief that it is natural for guys to make advances on girls they find attractive.

Consistent changes in responses to the rape myth items were observed for programme participants, particularly in relation to beliefs that girls have done something to invite rape, that guys do not intend to commit rape, and that some acts of rape are not really so. These are illustrated below in the percentage of programme participants who chose ‘agree / strongly agree’ response options:

	Female		Male	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
<b>When girls go to parties wearing slutty clothes, they are asking for trouble</b>	15	1	25	13
<b>If a girl initiates kissing or hooking up, she should not be surprised if a guy assume she wants to have sex</b>	17	8	42	22

<b>When guys rape, it is usually because of their strong desire for sex</b>	37	22	50	37
<b>A lot of times, girls who say they were raped agreed to have sex and then regretted it</b>	11	9	41	24

Pre-programme responses to items on rape myths indicate that beliefs clearly tolerant of assault still have a disturbingly high level of acceptance in a relatively large sample of young people, particularly among teenage boys. For instance, over 40% of the male programme participants agreed that guys can rape because of their sex drive, some girls claim rape after regretting having taken part in sex, and that guys can assume a girl wants sex because she took part in other forms of intimacy. Endorsement of these beliefs by males declined by 13-22% after the programme. The percentage of males who endorsed myths fell back to an improved but still unacceptable level. Acceptance of rape myths, in combination with heterosexual scripts, are a foundation for sexual and gender violence. Fewer females agreed with these myths before the programme, but still declined afterwards. Many students continued to be 'neutral' in regard to rape myths, highlighting the continuing and most likely systematic approach needed to counter these false narratives. This may indicate that rape myth beliefs are established by the time of engagement with the programme in Transition Year, and points toward the importance of delivering the programme earlier in secondary school.

The normalisation of pornography was addressed in the Manuela Programme and was reflected in the emergence of more critical perspectives on porn after the intervention. For instance, about half of the Pre Programme participants disagreed with the idea that pornography portrays realistic sex, rising afterwards to over 80% for females and 65% for males. There was less evidence of a change of views on sexting. The percentage of males who disagreed with the idea that sexting is harmless remaining more or less unchanged (12%), while the percentage of females who disagreed with this idea increasing, but only to 29%.

	<b>Female</b>		<b>Male</b>	
	<b>Pre</b>	<b>Post</b>	<b>Pre</b>	<b>Post</b>
<b>Porn portrays realistic sex</b>	57	83	49	65
<b>Sexting is relatively harmless</b>	18	29	12	15



All six sessions of the Manuela Programme were rated moderately or strongly positively by at least 70% of the students, with the “Prevention” (76% of students), “Action and Integration” (74%), and “Consent” (77%) sessions garnering the most positive ratings. In relation to the programme delivery components, participants rated the programme facilitators most positively, with 87% rating them moderately or strongly positively. Lower ratings were given to the use of scenarios in the programme (62%) and the length of the programme sessions (61%).

Ratings of the programme impact suggest that approximately three quarters of the male participants and four fifths of females identified with having experienced several positive outcomes as a result of taking part. For instance, nearly 80% of students said the programme had a significant or very significant impact on their respect for personal boundaries, how healthy relationships differ from unhealthy ones, and their understanding of what is meant by sexual violence.

There were gender differences in ratings of the programme sessions, delivery components, and impact, with males consistently providing less positive feedback. The difference in appraisals of the sessions was relatively small, but was somewhat larger in ratings of some of the delivery components (e.g., a 22% gender difference in the acceptability of scenarios, 15% difference in acceptability of session activities). The gender difference in percentage of students attributing a significant impact to the Manuela Programme was generally 5-10%, depending on the outcome.

## ***Qualitative Findings***

Follow up qualitative research with stakeholders and students showed that the programme delivery process was successful in many respects. The findings were nuanced in that students expressed a preference for external subject matter experts to facilitate the programme, whereas there was some evidence that teachers felt their professional peers would be acceptable to students in providing facilitation. While generally supportive of the programme delivery and materials, male students who took part in the programme expressed less positive evaluations of particular components within the programme and were sometimes described in the focus groups and other sources as less engaged in the programme process compared with female students. The following examples from the focus groups with young people illustrate the experiences young people had in taking part in the Manuela Programme:

<b>Awareness of consent and sexual violence</b>	<p><i>I think it's good for people to know that you are allowed to change your mind after you initiate sex or just say that you can't say that to me or do that to me.</i></p> <p><i>Because a lot of people feel manipulated by their partner.</i></p> <p><i>For it actually to be said, you know this is your right, you can do this if you are in a certain situation, that's really important for everyone to know (SFG10)</i></p> <p><i>Some people might think that they are weak or whatever or some people might think that they were at fault sometimes for what they wear or what they do. And the more you do the programme the more you realise that it's not their fault if they get attacked like even if they are too drunk to do anything when they get attacked or situations like that (SFG2)</i></p> <p><i>I think, you realise there's consequences to your actions. You know if you are on a night out like and you're just like messing around there or whatever but it's just it's not like, you can really hurt someone by the things you do. I think people need to know that (SFG10)</i></p>
<b>Critical thinking and discussion</b>	<p><i>Sometimes people, like, raise ideas that you hadn't thought about and that might make you move to the other side (SFG10)</i></p> <p><i>I liked arguing and sometimes changing my mind about different topics (SFG1)</i></p>
<b>Interactive, engaging</b>	<p><i>I liked how interactive the classes were. We weren't just sitting there listening the whole time (SFG5)</i></p> <p><i>It's better than just sitting in the classroom reading a book about it like. If it was done like that, no one would listen to it, it'd be really boring (SFG11)</i></p>
<b>Uncovering knowledge</b>	<p><i>I learned a lot during the programme, some things I had no knowledge on and I feel well educated on the topic now (SFG5)</i></p> <p><i>Learning about topics that aren't talked about in school like porn (SFG12)</i></p>
<b>External facilitation</b>	<p><i>You won't see them around again, so won't be that embarrassed.</i></p> <p><i>They don't know you and you don't know them (SFG4)</i></p> <p><i>They don't know you and they can't really judge you (SFG1)</i></p> <p><i>He knew what he was talking about ... Because you think what he's saying is true (SFG9)</i></p>
<b>Concern with standing out</b>	<p><i>Well like, you don't want people to think about you in a certain way by standing out on the other side of the room and, you know like, it's more male so it's kinda hard, like walking on eggshells (Male) (SFG10)</i></p>

While agreeing on the value of the programme and its utility in the emerging space in Irish education for innovative programmes of this nature, stakeholders expressed a range of views on future sustainability. Some stakeholders took a pragmatic approach, describing challenges in securing on-going financial support, uncertainty in the scope for establishing a sustainable strategy for facilitating the programme, and a need to review the scope and length of the programme. The stakeholders were responsive to the opportunities that present in the Irish secondary school system for a programme of this type, suggesting that, with curriculum revisions and timing to be considered, there is an argument to move the programme forward to the Junior Cycle and identify how it can be an on-going, age appropriate offering extending into the Senior Cycle.

The Manuela Programme is grounded in expertise and sectoral commitment across education, child welfare, and sexual violence, the extensive network that has developed around it, and the evidence that has emerged for its effectiveness. With these strengths, it can play an important role in the rapidly changing niche for sexual health education in Irish secondary school education. Identifying how the programme can develop in its contribution to the emerging ethos of consent education will be important, given the scope to accommodate both growth-oriented aspects of sexual health along with harm avoidance and preventative dimensions of sexual health.

The remainder of the Executive Summary provides a synthesis of the learning that has taken place through this evaluation, identifying key recommendations that will assist in future decision making and directions for the programme.

## ***Programme Opportunities***

There are a number of opportunities that could be engaged in to ensure sustainability of a programme that has a demonstrated evidence base, clear articulation of programme learning, and which has the potential for accommodating developmental changes arising from this evaluation. The Wellbeing and SPHE curriculum is currently being developed extensively in the Junior Cycle. This suggests an opportunity to adapt the Manuela Programme content and delivery, placing the programme in the Junior Cycle or at least staging the delivery to begin in the Junior Cycle. The Pre Programme questionnaire identified levels of rape myth and heterosexual script endorsement that suggests a need to engage with students at a younger age. The Pre Programme survey findings have value as a baseline survey of young people's attitudes. There are many young people who support untenable and misinformed views on sexual violence and gender roles, as well as those who lack confidence and agency with regard to assertive, active consent.

The NCCA review of the provision of RSE promises a long term structure for initiatives such as the Manuela Programme. The programme is strongly positioned given its credibility in the sector through association with the Rape Crisis Centres, Tusla, and a high level of research evaluation. Clearly articulating the niche of the programme and how it could articulate with other components of a holistic sexual health curriculum will be important to enable this opportunity to be maximised.

The professionalisation of teachers in terms of SPHE teaching is beginning through the provision of specialist training and programmes. therefore, it will be important to see this as an opportunity to set out teacher training in programme facilitation and indeed to link it to a broader level of preparation in sexual health education delivery for teachers.

There is clearly an opportunity to mobilise the teacher resource that exists already in the educational system. Many teachers feel strongly about the need to engage young people on sexual health, including sexual violence and consent. They see resources such as the Manuela Programme as important tools in achieving the goal of better preparing students in the future. Clearer signposting and recognition of supportive roles for teachers will be important to take advantage of this opportunity. This speaks to the need to identify a whole of school approach to supporting sexual health and wellness in schools, to formally acknowledging the role of teachers who contribute to RSE, and in offering them professional support, training, and advancement associated with this route.

The partnership that has been developed between Tusla and Rape Crisis Centres has been important to the delivery of the Manuela Programme. The complementarity of these groups provides links to national policy and decision making, along with the reach and recognition that Rape Crisis Centres have in local communities. Continuing to develop partnerships between agencies will be an important part of the future development that could take place to ensure the Manuela Programme is a conduit for partnership between statutory agencies, education providers, the voluntary sector, researchers, and policy makers.

## ***Programme Threats***

The Manuela Programme pilot project had an ambitious agenda to develop an engaging and informative curriculum, to provide for pilot implementation across four regions, and to develop teachers as an ongoing resource for future delivery. These goals were largely delivered on, but there are several threats to building on these achievements in the next stages of programme development.

Maintaining fidelity to a manualised programme is critical to ensuring quality and minimising risks to participants. Making the programme available for schools to implement

independently represents a threat to fidelity. There should therefore be a clear strategy to maintaining fidelity and quality assurance, potentially by shortening or simplifying the programme itself to ensure there are fewer components, and having a strategy to monitor ongoing delivery and outcomes. Teachers could find it challenging to move to a facilitation mode of engaging with students, and therefore require access to training and ongoing support.

It could be said that all the topics covered in the Manuela Programme are highly sensitive. However certain topics have an especially high level of sensitivity. Covering topics such as pornography use and sexual assault could be most difficult for teachers, requiring a high level of skill, with a clear need to identify how best to support delivery of topics that could benefit from external expertise and innovative approaches.

The clear threat to sustainability is accessing resources and the implementation model to be used in the future. This threat could be addressed by developing a model of partnership between programme supporters across different sectors in the community, welfare, education, policy and academic sectors. The Department of Education and Skills traditionally does not have a role in promoting particular programmes. Therefore there is a risk posed to the sustainability of the programme if a clear funding and support strategy is not agreed. Identifying the goals of the Manuela Programme within the framework of the Brighter Futures, Better Outcomes strategy for supporting youth (Department of Children & Youth Affairs, 2018) would promote interagency partnership in establishing a network of support.

The possibility of moving at least part of the Manuela Programme curriculum to the Junior Cycle (with adaptation) is an opportunity. Yet there is an associated threat in moving from a Transition Year delivery model to one based in the Junior Cycle – to potentially compete for space in timetables and carry out the development work required to adapt content and strategies to the Junior Cycle. There is also a high level of uncertainty in the sector given the review of RSE by the Department of Education and Skills informed by the NCCA. Reviewing the programme delivery model and revising programme materials will be essential steps in ensuring that these threats can be responded to in an effective manner.

## Key Recommendations

Recommendations can be suggested in key areas arising from the evaluation findings and implications for programme strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. It is recommended that the key strategies outlined below are supported by a stakeholder advisory process that ensures there is continued development of the key partnerships that have initiated the Manuela Programme, along with input from key agencies and Government departments that can ensure the programme is well articulated with funding and collaboration opportunities.

### Content

The programme content is largely supported by the findings of the evaluation, with the recommendation to enhance consent skills programming and practical skills with relation to negotiating situations that pose a risk for sexual violence.

The content should be reviewed and updated where relevant, particularly in light of more recent research evidence and with input from young people to ensure that scenarios, audio-visual materials and activities are current, credible, and refreshed on a regular basis.

### Format

The engagement and learning strategies used in the sessions were generally supported. A high level of positive feedback was provided that suggests the programme is distinctive and appreciated by the students. However a review in light of student feedback on certain strategies should be undertaken concurrently with a review of content. Sustainability and acceptability are threatened through the use of a 12 hour format delivered in two-hour sessions. With expert input, the core elements of the content should be reviewed to reduce the overall amount of programming, thereby reducing the number of sessions or hours of delivery. A more modular format could be explored, with core and optional modules that would provide maximum flexibility while mindful of coherent programme learning outcomes.



## ***Delivery Model***

The involvement of project workers was a distinct advantage in the model of delivery, and should be continued as a source of expertise and an essential aid to planning, mentoring, and delivery. Nevertheless, this resourcing model involves significant amounts of funding. Clearly the involvement of teaching staff will also be required to scale up the programme. The evaluation did not include examples of teacher-only delivery of the programme, but there are risks in this approach without sufficient training and ongoing support. This was apparent from the students' negative anticipation in relation to a programme delivery system that relies on teachers. It is recommended that the delivery model retains an appropriate level of input from specialists and experts, at least in a mentoring role. A further recommendation is to support teachers to collaborate between schools as a shared resource to could make teacher-led delivery more feasible, and contribute to a community of practice among teachers.

## ***Delivery Window***

The Junior Cycle represents a key opportunity for securing a sustainable future for the Manuela Programme that could better address the entrenched nature of negative rape myths and traditional sexual scripting at an earlier stage. Nevertheless, moving to the Junior Cycle delivery window would require extensive adaptation of the programme over and above the revisions to content and format needed for continued Senior Cycle delivery. Moreover, given that many students are becoming sexually active post-Junior Cert, it would be critical to ensure there is 'top up' and progressive programming in the Senior Cycle. Therefore a staged model of delivery is recommended, whereby adaptation is made for age appropriate materials. Planning for a developmental approach to engaging with adolescents on consent and sexual violence could draw on sexual health promotion as a guiding framework.

## ***Training and Education***

The concerns that students voiced, combined with the perception of some teachers that they will not be able to deliver to the same quality as project workers, calls for a considerable development in the training and education that teachers will receive. Traditionally, schools have relied on external delivery of sex education, but more direct involvement will be required if it becomes a mainstream aspect of student experience. Moreover, ongoing top up training and CPD would be required for teachers once they have completed initial training as a facilitator. It is recommended that the training and education programme for teachers is

therefore expanded and manualised, with the potential to seek further educational partners and accrediting organisations.

It is further recommended that the whole of school approach is supported by making available an appropriate level of awareness raising education for other staff in schools and in relevant organisations. Consideration should be given to devising an outreach programme to enable parents to support the learning outcomes of the programme. The adoption of a more ecological approach would require additional resourcing, and involve awareness raising among all teachers with principals providing leadership on ensuring the approach is well integrated and sustained.

### ***Monitoring and Evaluation***

The pilot programme was relatively well supported by specialised project workers. Even with continued support for equivalent posts in the future, the intense nature of support to date will be difficult to sustain if the goal of greater levels of take up is to be achieved. Therefore, it is important to have a fidelity monitoring system to ensure that the programme delivery continues to be of high and consistent quality. This links with the recommendation of ensuring there is a multi-level training programme. The ongoing evaluation of the Manuela Programme will be essential for continued funding applications and for outcomes assessment. The research survey instrument is too long and complex for routine use. A 'core indicators' adaptation of this instrument is required along with the development of innovative ongoing student feedback strategies. Moreover, with the recommendation to expand the scope of the programme to address key stakeholders, ongoing evaluation of any novel strategies such as enhanced training and outreach would also be required.

## Conclusion

The research evaluation of the Manuela Programme involved over 700 students, approximately one-third of the total number of students who took part in the extended pilot roll-out of the programme overall through partnership between Tusla, Rape Crisis Centres, and schools. The quantitative findings demonstrated that participating in the programme led to significant improvements in relation to positive consent attitudes and confidence, and lower levels of rape myths and negative gender stereotypes. Nevertheless, this was in the context of baseline attitudes and beliefs that suggested worrying trends for Irish adolescents of Transition Year age. Qualitative research with students and stakeholders underscored the value of the programme, supporting the idea that the programme leads to positive changes and has a delivery process that is engaging and youth-appropriate. This is a promising result given the relevance of supporting confidence consent and personal agency alongside tackling the ongoing problem of sexual violence. The conclusion of the pilot phase of the programme provided the scope for reflection on the next steps to support the sustainability of the programme. Opportunities for future development can be identified arising from national policy changes in RSE, yet navigating these opportunities and associated challenges will require concerted focus and partnership. The promising roll-out positions the Manuela Programme as a potential core offering in relation to consent and sexual violence for schools in Ireland, which is clearly much needed and timely.

## *Manuela Riedo Foundation*



**Galway Rape  
Crisis Centre**  
SERVICES FOR SEXUAL  
TRAUMA & ABUSE



KERRY RAPE &  
SEXUAL ABUSE CENTRE



RCC The Dublin Rape Crisis Centre

**Wexford  
Rape  
Crisis**

Services for  
Domestic, Sexual  
and Gender-based  
Violence **Est. 1995**

# TÜSLA

An Ghníomhaireacht um  
Leanaí agus an Teaghlach  
Child and Family Agency