

Violence is a 'major problem' for British children

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Violence against children is becoming a 'major problem' reports the NSPCC

More than 40% of secondary school children have been the victims of violence at school and three quarters have been bullied there, a charity said today.

A survey of 11 to 16-year-olds for the NSPCC found 42% of children had been hit, punched or kicked at school and almost one in 10 (9%) had been attacked with a weapon or object.

The charity is calling on Gordon Brown to use his first 100 days as Prime Minister to tackle violence against children, described by 81% of youngsters questioned as "a major problem for young people nowadays".

One in six (16%) children said they had been hit, kicked or punched on the streets and 7% they had been attacked with a weapon or object, the survey found.

In addition, a large number of UK youngsters were witnesses to violence, with 59% saying they had seen violence or bullying between young people on the street.

A quarter of those questioned said they had witnessed domestic violence between family members. Just under half of recent incidents (47%) involved physical assaults and 13% used objects or weapons.

It is estimated that over a 100-day period 205,000 children will witness domestic violence.

Two fifths of the 1,172 boys and girls asked by GfK NOP about violence in their lives saw it as "part of growing up".

And it left them fearful, with 22% frightened of violence towards them at school and 38% "really scared" of attacks against them by young people they didn't know.

Less than half of those questioned thought there was enough support for them to deal with violence (44%), and 28% said they want to see specialist anti-bullying counsellors and school lessons on how to stay safe.

The NSPCC's chief executive Dame Mary Marsh said: "Although a snapshot, this survey shows how children themselves feel that violence invades their lives at school, home and on the streets, sometimes daily.

"Children should not have to accept violence as part of growing up. Much of it could be stopped if governments across the UK took action."

She said one in three children who call ChildLine say they are suffering from violence and abuse and that bullying has been the main reason for calling the helpline for the past 10 years.

"There couldn't be a better way for Gordon Brown to start his new premiership than by relieving the misery of children in desperate need of help," she said.

The NSPCC is currently running its Don't Hide It campaign, aimed at 11 to 16-year-olds, which urges children to speak out about all forms of abuse.

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