How important are role models and peer pressure in causing violence? – Transcript

**Dr Christine Goodall, Director, Medics Against Violence**:But I think the role model thing is a vitally important thing for young people. And I think most of the young people who maybe watch this film will have great role models at home, their parents will be fantastic role models for them. But, sadly, some kids don’t have that. And, you know, I think one of the most important things for young people is to have somebody that they can look to and emulate.

So, if your role model is somebody who is behaving violently, you might end up behaving violently. Where, somebody who doesn’t - you won’t. So, you know, that’s a really important thing.

And I think, I think the other issue for young people, particularly if they’re hanging about in gangs, is peer pressure. So, I think there are a lot of misperceptions around what young people think is acceptable. We’ve… certainly, when we’ve done studies where we’ve asked students – so, a bit older than your audience – but students about how they feel about drinking, and how they think their friends feel about drinking. What they think is that their friends are a lot more comfortable with drinking than they actually are.

So, because they perceive the social norm around drinking to be that students like drinking and they want to drink a lot, they then drink more than they want to because they want to fit in with that social norm. And you’ll find that, as well, with things like knife-carrying. So, if kids perceive knife-carrying to be the social norm and that everybody thinks it’s acceptable, then more of them will do it. Where, in fact, I think what you’ll probably find, if you speak to them individually, they’ll still be frightened of carrying a knife, they’ll be uncomfortable with it, they’ll not want to use it, and so on. But because they feel everybody else is doing it, they feel they have to do it.

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