Preparing for Healthy Relationships: Teacher's Toolkit

Activities, resources and useful links for primary schools

Ending Gender-Based Violence

Teacher Toolkit

Written by Tender Education & Arts in partnership with the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC).

Contents

About Tender

Since 2003 Tender has worked to prevent domestic abuse and sexual violence in the lives of children and young people. Our arts-based education programmes reach over 30,000 young people aged between the ages of 8 – 25 years old every year: preventing them from becoming victims or perpetrators, and supporting them to build healthy, equal relationships which enrich their lives. Through our work, we aim to ensure:

1. Children and young people will be **prepared and empowered** to develop and maintain healthy relationships.
2. Communities and settings children and young people inhabit will be **safe and supportive** places.

Tender is one of the few UK organisations focused solely on the prevention of domestic abuse and sexual violence amongst children and young people. We use drama, art and media to provide a safe, enjoyable space where children can engage with sensitive topics, 'rehearse' for real life scenarios and explore their rights, responsibilities and expectations within relationships.

It is important that children and young people know about healthy and unhealthy relationships and how to get support. We know that by challenging problematic behaviour, language, beliefs and attitudes we can contribute to ending a culture of abuse that disproportionately affects women and girls, with statistics from the Office of National Statistics (ONS) showing that in the year ending March 2022 the victim was female in 74.1% of domestic abuse-related crimes.[1]

Talking about misogyny, sexism and discrimination can be challenging for both adults and young people alike. It is important that we don't overlook the gendered nature of these issues but, at the same time, don't alienate boys and young men from the conversation and instead encourage allyship.

Tender has worked in partnership with the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC), teachers, youth workers and partner organisations to develop the activities and resources within this toolkit to support children and young people to develop healthy relationships based on equality and respect.

[1] Domestic abuse victim characteristics, England and Wales: year ending March 2022, Office for National Statistics.

Introduction to the activities

Tender has been designing and delivering healthy relationships workshops since 2003. The exercises outlined below are tried and tested methods of initiating discussion and opening up the topics of healthy friendships and relationships for exploration. They have been developed by Tender staff alongside those who work with children and young people in education and youth work settings, as well as children and young people themselves. The activities have been applied in a wide variety of settings and are aimed at pupils in Years 5 & 6 (9 – 11 years old). Some of the activities might be suitable for younger age groups (Years 3 & 4) but adaptations may be necessary depending on the needs and/or maturity level of the group.

At primary school, children are beginning to meet and understand new people outside of their family unit. They are beginning to develop skills in communication and empathy. These years are crucial for us to support them to build a keen understanding of their rights and responsibilities when it comes to safeguarding their own wellbeing and respecting the feelings of others. It is imperative therefore that education around attitudes and beliefs is provided in order to prevent harmful behaviours from escalating and to promote safe help-seeking behaviours. This toolkit will enable professionals to educate children and young people about these topics, creating a shift in attitudes, behaviour and knowledge, encouraging allyship and supporting them to challenge any tolerance of gender-based violence and abuse in the future.

Our primary school content is intended to provide children with a solid and age-appropriate foundation of skills and knowledge, upon which they can build and nurture their future relationships. Delivered in an engaging and interactive format, our work explores the healthy and unhealthy aspects of friendships and relationships, encouraging students to consider their attitudes and behaviour in a mature and safety-conscious way. Alongside empowering children with the tools to recognise and develop respectful, equal friendships and relationships with others, we also equip them with an awareness of their rights and how to seek support if they feel unsafe. We believe that encouraging equality and empathy between children is best achieved in an environment where we welcome and encourage their contribution, and where they feel comfortable to engage in discussion around these topics in an open, non-judgemental, and creative manner.

The aim of this work is to instil the core messages of respect and equality in children, enabling them to build resilience, be aware of their own boundaries and

to respect other peoples', and to understand how these relate to power and responsibility.

Please ensure that you have read the Contextual information section of this toolkit (p.25) before delivering any activities as this will provide further guidance and help support conversations in this area.

Good practice

Ground rules

When broaching the topic of healthy friendships or relationships, you may wish to agree on some ground rules before beginning work on the issue, even if you have already established ground rules in the classroom. Talking about friendships and relationships can be a new and 'sticky' subject for many children, so it may help to put their minds at ease to re-establish the boundaries of the conversation before it starts.

Ask that everyone treats each other's opinions respectfully. It may be useful to invite the class to come up with their own ground rules, as this will increase their willingness to adhere to them. Examples of useful ground rules include the ability to take 'time out' should you need to, listening carefully to the opinions of others and treating the subject with sensitivity.

Let pupils know that the session may feel different to other lessons, and that you really want to hear their thoughts and opinions during the activities. Highlight that the session may be challenging at times as pupils may disagree with each other. Reassure them that this is okay as long as they do so in calm and respectful way.

Remember you are there to facilitate discussion, create a safe space and support children in communicating their ideas and deepening their understanding of the topic. Bear in mind the sensitivity of the topic and how this may impact the behaviour of pupils. If the session is bringing up difficult emotions for individuals, they may display challenging behaviour. Do not take behaviour personally and be mindful that behaviour is always a form of communication. You should always refer to your school's safeguarding policy if a child's behaviour makes you concerned.

Further guidance on how to set ground rules for RSE can be found here:
Teaching about relationships, sex and health, Department of Education.

Facilitating discussions about friendships & relationships

Talking about friendships and relationships can be uncomfortable for some people and everyone approaches these conversations through the lens of their own experiences. In line with current relationships education guidance, children should be engaged in active discussions about families and people who care for them, caring friendships and respectful relationships (both online and offline). It is important to bear in mind, however, that these relationships will not always be healthy.

It is useful to note that when working with primary school age children, it is safer and more age-appropriate to frame any discussions around 'healthy friendships' or 'healthy relationships' rather than topics such as 'domestic abuse' or 'gender-based abuse' as these terms can be unnecessarily alarming or feel too intense for younger children.

Primary-age children may be ready to talk about the prospect of romantic relationships in the future, or they may feel that it's not relevant to them. Either way, there are lots of different types of relationships that we can explore, which provide opportunities to talk about important topics like equality, respect, and communication. Some examples might include friendships, relationships with siblings, or relationships with adults in their lives such as teachers.

Most classes will contain individuals that have experienced or witnessed abuse, so it is important that discussions are managed sensitively. Although we would advise talking about abuse within a framing of "healthy or unhealthy friendships or relationships" and would minimise use of terms like 'domestic abuse' or 'gender-based violence' with primary school-age children, it is still important to preclude all discussions with a 'health warning'. This should set the tone in terms of the gravity of the situation, include information about who to speak to if someone is affected by the issue, and reference to self-care. A suggested outline is provided below as a guide:

'Some of what we are going to talk about during the workshops is quite sensitive and you might feel uncomfortable at times; you might giggle or feel upset. All of this is okay. If you feel you need some time away from the lesson, please let me know. If you would like to talk about anything after the lesson you are welcome to speak to me (or any other teacher).'

Participants should be free to express themselves, but some attitudes (for example gender stereotypes or sexist language) may be upsetting for individuals unless they are handled properly. Teachers should aim for a balance that allows children to contribute openly, whilst managing any potentially difficult conversations safely and encouraging participants to challenge one another in a respectful manner. One of the most powerful elements to Tender's approach is that it gives participants space to question their peers and learn from each other. However, it is the responsibility of the teacher to ensure any negative attitudes are challenged constructively and to guide the focus of discussion.

Honest and open debate enables children and young people to reach their own positive conclusions. Often groups will be able to deal with negative attitudes effectively themselves, and these conclusions are more valuable when arrived at through their own discussions.

Primary school terminology

High-quality relationships education in primary schools is an integral part of preventing domestic abuse and sexual violence in future relationships, and safeguarding children at all stages of their life. Tender's approach to this is age-appropriate and focused on building positive perceptions of relationships, meaning we do not tend to use the words abuse, sexual abuse or sexual violence when exploring these topics with primary-age children. We instead approach these topics by focusing on core components and themes. The focus for individual sessions may include self-esteem, healthy friendships, personal space and boundaries, empathy, constructive communication, emotions, bodily autonomy, consent, and safe/unsafe touch (as guided by the NSPCC Underwear Rule), pressure and coercion, the Rights of the Child (using the UN Convention) and signposting and support.

The terminology and activities in this pack have been designed so they are age appropriate. However, if discussions around domestic abuse or sexual violence do arise and anything is disclosed to you, or you have a cause for concern, then please follow your setting's safeguarding procedures. The work around personal space, boundaries and safe/unsafe touch are all forerunners of teaching about consent which takes place at secondary level. Whilst RSE guidance highlights that pupils should understand 'the importance of permission-seeking and giving in relationships with friends, peers and adults', Tender believes it is important to equip pupils with the correct terminology so that children understand what consent is from a young age. Hopefully this then becomes something they are

comfortable discussing, and seeking from others, within all of their present and future relationships.

When working with primary schools, we often avoid explicit conversations about gender, and we certainly do not refer to the gender disparity of domestic abuse and gender-based violence or abuse, as highlighted in this toolkit. Instead, we aim to equip all young people with the skills, knowledge, and confidence to identify harmful, or potentially harmful, behaviours in any relationship. In taking this approach, we are not disregarding the need for a gendered lens when exploring how to tackle abuse. Rather we believe that gender neutral conversations, early on in life, can help to reframe children's perceptions of power in relationships before they have (in most cases) experienced this themselves.

Disclosures and cause for concern

The issue of confidentiality should be addressed as soon as possible with any group you are working with. They should be informed about the limits of your ability to maintain confidentiality and what can happen to information they share within the lesson, including naming the safeguarding lead/officer for the school.

It should be made clear to the group that they will not be asked to disclose their own experiences - none of these plans and resources require them to do so - as some people may be concerned about this possibility. Disclosures may occur so it is important that pupils understand the need for confidentiality within the group. However, you should explain that if they disclose anything that makes you concerned for their welfare, or that of someone else, you will need to share this information with other people who can help.

Pupils who do choose to share personal stories should not be criticised for doing so as it may be the first time they have spoken out. Those who wish to seek support are likely to do so outside of group sessions. The group should be made aware of where they can go for help, including school staff, police and any relevant outside agencies such as Childline (0800 1111). You should try to minimise the use of personal stories in workshops as these may derail the conversation by reducing a general issue to a single example. It may also be unsafe to discuss real life stories in a group context.

If a child discloses during or after a workshop it is important to stay calm and listen carefully to what is said. Do not promise to keep secrets and find an appropriate early opportunity to explain that it is likely that the information will need to be shared with others. You should allow the child to continue at their own pace, and

only ask questions for clarification purposes (at all times avoid asking questions that suggest a particular answer). Reassure the child that they have done the right thing in telling you and tell them what you will do next and with whom the information will be shared. We would then recommend that you record in writing what was said using the child's own words as soon as possible (noting the date, time, any names mentioned and to whom the information was given and ensure that the record is signed and dated).

You may not receive a direct disclosure from a pupil but may have cause for concern due to something they have perhaps said, or behaviour they have exhibited. If you have any concerns about a child, you should follow your school's safeguarding procedures, which may advise speaking to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).

Peer learning

The messaging around healthy relationships and equality is much stronger when heard from someone of a similar age; there is power in children and young people talking to each other. Consider how these activities could contribute to pupils engaging with one another and discussing these issues respectfully. This develops a culture across the school where children can ask for help, and promoting healthy friendships and relationships is seen as a shared responsibility.

Support

Children should be reminded of where they can access support or help if either they, or someone they know, is worried, distressed or being harmed in relation to any of the topics that you have explored.

Information about what support is available in your school should be provided along with details about more general services such as Childline. Further details about signposting and support can be found in both the 'Support Tree' exercise and Support section of this toolkit.

In addition, details of any local services could be provided if these are endorsed by the school.

A school's approach

Schools must recognise that healthy relationships and equality education cannot be covered in a one-hour lesson each week; the approach to, and the core messages of the work, must be embedded throughout the school culture. Schools must be consistent in their approach and commitment to the work, and the key themes and values of any lesson must be repeated and reflected throughout the whole school community and academic year. This toolkit is designed to be a guide to support teachers and educators to start conversations around healthy and unhealthy friendships and relationships, but on its own is not designed to instigate full-community change. You may wish to talk to your Senior Leadership Team (SLT) about how relationships education can be best embedded throughout the school culture. Ensure you have parental consent before delivering any RSE content, and we would encourage you to work with your academy trust or local authority and local public health teams when embedding statutory relationships education within your whole school ethos to ensure what you are delivering is in line with what is being done locally.

Activities

Practical considerations

The following activities include information about any associated learning aims, minimum suggested timings, recommendations in terms of group size and age of participants, as well as any resources that you may need for delivery. When planning a session, it is important to consider the group size, the needs, and strengths of the children you will be working with, and any time restrictions.

Environment

For most of the activities contained in this toolkit, we advise that any desks or tables are moved to the side and chairs are arranged in a circle in the middle of the room. Participants will occasionally need to lean on a surface to write or draw, but generally, pupils will sit or stand in a circle. It is important when dealing with sensitive issues that we create a 'safe space' for participants; if pupils feel that the environment is open and supportive, they are more likely to share ideas and opinions. A circular seating arrangement establishes that everyone is equal and there is no hierarchy. As such, people are more likely to feel valued and comfortable to express themselves. It is also useful to identify a private space in which to work – i.e. one where others are not walking through or where you are

likely to be disturbed. This can help minimise distractions and ensure children feel heard and can remain calm within the space.

Adaptations

These activities are intended as a guide and can be adapted to explore specific topics that are relevant to the children you work with or tailored to the responses of the group. You should ensure that you leave enough time to address any challenging statements that have arisen, or to fully explore any important conversations that have developed. You can choose to run one activity or more as appropriate.

Opening and closing activities

We'd always suggest starting any session with a short game or 'icebreaker' to build trust, develop group dynamics and help children feel comfortable. Establishing opening and closing practices can create a sense of safety for the group and consistency is key. Some examples might include: beginning and ending each session with a game, or opening and closing each session with a question, such as, 'on a scale of 1 – 10; 1 being the lowest and 10 the highest – how are you feeling today?' Asking, 'what has been the most valuable learning for you today?' or 'what would your younger self have liked to know' are other ways of effectively closing a session. Alternatively, you might prefer to ask 'lighter' questions such as, 'If you could have any superpower, what superpower would you have?'

You should always leave time at the end of any session to 'check in' with participants and answer any questions they may have.

In addition, at the end of any activity, participants should be reminded of where they can access support for anything that is upsetting, worrying, or distressing them. Support options within your particular school or setting should be highlighted, as well as any key external support services such as Childline **(see Activity 5 – Support Tree for further information)**.

Context setting

These activities are taken from Tender's extensive curriculum which has been developed in response to government statutory guidance for RSE. The resources included in this toolkit are particularly relevant to the following primary curriculum areas; **Caring friendships, Respectful relationships, Online relationships** and **Being safe.** **As previously mentioned, they are aimed at**

pupils in Years 5 & 6 (9-11 years old) but may be adapted for Years 3 & 4 (7-9 years old) if appropriate.

Activity 1 – House of friendship

Aim: To identify healthy and unhealthy behaviours and qualities in a friendship or relationship.
Minimum suggested timing: 20-minutes **Group size:** 5 – 30
Suggested age: 9 – 11 years old
Resources: Several pieces of flipchart/sugar paper and marker pens

Instructions:
Divide the class into small groups and give each a large sheet of paper and some marker pens. Pupils should draw the outline of a house onto their sheets of paper. This needs to fill the paper, but they should also leave some space around the outside of their drawing. Next, ask them as a group to write as many words as possible that they think describe a healthy/positive friendship inside the house. Some examples might include:

- Kindness
- Respect
- Laughing
- Loyalty

Where words such as 'kindness' or 'loyalty' appear, pupils should be encouraged to be specific. What do these words actually mean? What does kindness look or sound like? Can they think of any specific examples? It can also be useful to ask children to consider their own friendships during this exercise. Who are they friends with and why? What do they like about them?

Groups should then feedback some of their examples to the rest of the class and discuss any differences and/or commonalities. It can be useful here to ask groups to choose what they think are the two most important qualities from their lists and share their reasons why.

Next, ask each group to move around so they are sitting next to a piece of paper that isn't their original (you can move the pieces of paper if that is easier). Pupils should then write as many words as possible that they think describe an unhealthy/negative friendship around the outside of their new house. Some examples might include:

- Rudeness
- Bullying
- Shouting
- Name-calling

Again, any ambiguous or 'general' words should be explored in detail. What does rudeness look/sound like? What different types of bullying are there? What hurtful names might someone be called? This can help open up discussions around diversity and the importance of respecting and celebrating people's differences.

Again, selected examples should be fed back to the rest of the class and discussed. If this hasn't been covered already, you could ask if there were any words that they would add to either inside or outside the house to describe healthy and unhealthy cyber/online relationships.

Extension exercise:
Ask groups to choose one word from inside and one word from outside of their house of friendship and create a freeze frame for each. Share these freeze frames with the rest of the class, who guess which words are being represented.

Activity 2 – Red flags

Aim: To identify early warning signs - or 'red flags' – of an unhealthy friendship or relationship.
Minimum suggested timing: 30-minutes
Group size: 5 – 30
Suggested age: 9 – 11 years old
Resources: Copies of 'Waiting' script x 1 per pupil and red flags (a piece of red paper or card) x 1 per pupil

Instructions:
Hand out copies of the script and give pupils time to read it through in pairs. You should then encourage pupils to get the scene 'on its feet' and consider staging and characterisation. Whilst students are working, you can assume the role of director and offer guidance and support as appropriate.

Ask for two volunteers to perform the script for the rest of the group. You can watch multiple versions of the scene if there is time.

'Waiting' script

Alex: Hey, how are you?

Frankie: I'm alright. I've been waiting ages.

Alex: Yeah, I was talking to Sam.

Frankie: I've felt really stupid sitting here on my own.

Alex: *(ignoring comment)* Let's go then.

Frankie: Where are we going?

Alex: Round Sam's.

Frankie: You're joking.

Alex: What's your problem?

Frankie: You're late meeting me 'cos you were chatting with your mate and now we're going round there – I don't even like Sam.

Alex: Don't start...

Frankie: I'm not, I just don't want to go round to Sam's.

Alex: Well, where d'you want to go then?

Frankie: I don't know.

Alex: You can't ever make a decision, and then when I do you get all emotional.

Frankie: I just don't like going round there – Sam's creepy.

Alex: That's my mate you're talking about.

Frankie stands up.

Alex: Are you wearing that?

Frankie: What?

Alex: It makes you look a bit...

Frankie: What?

Alex: It makes you look a bit funny.

Note: If pupils are too nervous to perform you can read it through in-situ as a whole group (taking one line at a time) or display the text on an interactive whiteboard.

Discuss the group's initial ideas about what they think is happening in the scene.

Some useful prompt questions might include:

- What is happening in this scene?
- What is Alex and Frankie's relationship?
- Is this behaviour normal/acceptable within a friendship/relationship?
- On a scale of 1-10 – 1 being most unhealthy, 10 being most healthy - where is this friendship?
- Who has more power in this friendship?
- What does Frankie mean when they say Sam is 'creepy'? How might Sam behave?

If pupils bring up the use of the word 'creepy' discuss what this means and how it might make someone feel. Tender would say that the word 'creepy' implies that Sam makes Frankie uncomfortable, and this might be because they don't respect Frankie's boundaries.

Explain that this script has been created to explore red flags in friendships and relationships. It can be useful to facilitate a short discussion about where else we might see red flags – i.e. on the football pitch or at the beach – and to identify what purpose they have in these situations. Explain to the group that looking out for 'red flags' in friendships or relationships is a useful way of identifying when something could potentially become unhealthy or unsafe, or when someone might be trying to control you.

Note: Students often feel like Frankie deserves to be treated badly in this scene because they are 'moody' towards Alex and rude about Sam. However, the focus should always remain on Alex's behaviour as this is the root cause of any ill-feeling in this scene. Alex has disregarded Frankie's feelings in a number of ways, so Frankie has every right to feel annoyed. The responsibility to resolve this situation lies with Alex and could easily be achieved with a simple apology or more thoughtful responses from Alex.

Give each pupil a red flag (a piece of red paper or card) and ask for two more volunteers to perform the script. During this version the group must raise their red flag whenever they see or hear something that they think is unsafe or

unhealthy. You should then explore any point at which pupils wave their flags and their reasons why.

Red flags present:

Control:

- Deciding where they go.
- Deciding who they see/spend time with.
- Keeping someone waiting for ages.

Comments on Appearance:

- Comments on what the other person is wearing.
- How would these comments make someone feel?
- Can you ever be too honest?

Tone:

- Disregard for the other person's feelings.
- Not apologising for being late.
- Aggressive language – e.g. 'What's your problem?' and 'Don't start….'
- Is Alex right to be annoyed at Frankie for calling Sam 'creepy'? How else could they respond?

Ask the group: If this situation was happening to a friend, how would you explain what red flags are or help a friend who was experiencing something similar? Let the group know that you will be looking at who they can go to for support later on.

Devising extension activity:
Working in pairs, ask pupils to create a healthy version of this scene. When creating their scenes, students should be encouraged to consider what Alex could do or say to change this interaction from unhealthy to healthy.

If there is time, watch some versions back and highlight any examples of healthy behaviours or communication that we can identify.

Learning point:
As we have previously identified, looking out for 'Red Flags' in friendships or relationships is a useful way of identifying when something could potentially become unhealthy or unsafe, or when someone might be trying to control us. It is important that we are able to identify these in our own friendships or relationships.

If a child or young person is ever worried about someone else's behaviour, or is ever made to feel uncomfortable or unsafe, they should always speak to a trusted adult.

Activity 3 – Pressure bottle

Aim: To explore different types of pressure and recognise how it can be used to exert power or control in a friendship or relationship.
Minimum suggested timing: 20-minutes
Group size: 5 – 30
Suggested age: 9 - 11 years old
Resources: Water bottle

Instructions:
Pupils must sit on chairs in a circle. One chair is placed in the middle of the circle and a volunteer is chosen to sit on that chair; this person is given a bottle of water to hold. Explain to the group that they need to imagine they are no longer at school; instead, they are stranded in the desert. Ask pupils to describe what the desert is like - i.e. hot, and dry. Explain that the only access the group has to water is the bottle belonging to the volunteer.

The rest of the group must take it in turns to try and persuade (or pressure!) the person in the middle to give them the bottle.

Choose a volunteer to go first. The volunteer is allowed to do or say whatever they want in order to try and obtain the bottle. However, there are a couple of rules that must be followed for safety: they can't just snatch the bottle (it must be offered) and physical contact is not allowed. Volunteers should also be encouraged to keep their chosen tactic a secret as it can be fun to let the rest of the group independently identify the different types of pressure on display.

Note: Both pupils involved in the role play should be encouraged to play truthfully, remembering they are in the desert. For the volunteer holding the bottle, it is important that if someone uses a tactic that they feel would work on them, they should hand the bottle over. This helps to avoid a situation where the person with the bottle purposefully refuses each attempt, which can derail the role play.

To explore further dynamics of peer-pressure you may wish to have multiple volunteers employing the same tactic at the same time to see how this impacts the role play.

If pupils get stuck or you find that they are repeating particular tactics, you can highlight some of the examples below to offer further guidance or support.

Examples of tactics:

Asking – e.g. 'Please can I have some water?'
Flattery – e.g, 'You are so generous; you'll give me some water, won't you?'
Threatening Harm – e.g. 'If you don't give me that water, I'm going to hurt you and your family.'
Guilt – e.g. 'I'm so thirsty. I can't go on much longer without having something to drink.'
Anger – e.g. 'You make me so angry! Give that water! I'm thirsty!'
Blame – e.g. 'It's your fault I want some water, you are the one standing there showing off that you have something to drink, and I don't. If you weren't here, I wouldn't even think about being thirsty. You're useless.'

Ask the young person with the bottle of water how it felt to have someone try and persuade them to do something that they didn't want to do. What tactics worked on them and why? Ask the other participants how it felt to pressure someone.

Learning point:
Pressure can take many forms and it isn't always obvious. Even people we love and care about, such as friends or family, can put pressure on us. Sometimes it is easier for them to do this effectively as they know us (and the types of pressures we might be vulnerable to) really well. It is useful to explore these pressures in advance so that we can 'rehearse' how we might want to respond in the real world.

The message to children and young people should always be clear: If someone pressures you into doing something that makes you feel unsafe or uncomfortable you should always tell a trusted adult.

Activity 4 – Rights

Aim: To explore children's rights and to promote a culture of respect within the school community.
Minimum suggested timing: 20-minutes
Group size: 5 – 30
Suggested age: 9 – 11 years old
Resources: Small slips of paper/post-it notes x 1 per pupil and pens

Instructions:
Ask pupils to consider human rights – *what are they and why they are important?* Challenge them to come up with a definition. The following can be used to clarify and clear up any misconceptions the group may have:

'Rights are what everybody should be able to do to make them happy, safe and healthy.'

Once the above definition has been agreed, ask the group to identify different rights that they have. These could be larger, more universal rights that relate to a great number of people, or something that is more personal to them. The important thing is that whatever is suggested fits the above definition. Some examples might include:

- **We have the right to be listened to**
- **I have the right to be safe**
- **We have the right to an education**
- **I have the right to say 'No!'**
- **We have the right to play with our friends**
- **I have the right to personal space**

Next, children should each choose one right that is particularly important to them and write it on a post-it note or piece of paper. These should then be shared with the rest of the group (if they would like to do so – remember, they have the right to say no!) and collected in by the person leading the exercise.

One by one this person should go through the suggestions and pick some at random to discard or throw away. This will hopefully provoke quite a strong reaction from the children taking part in the exercise. If you are asked why you are doing this, simply reply that you are in charge and you can do whatever you like! Let this discussion continue for a few minutes before calming the group down and asking them to reflect on their experience.

Some useful questions:

- How did it feel to have some of your rights taken away from you?
- If you lose this right what could happen next?
- How did you react to having your rights taken away? Did you just accept it, or did you react in another way?
- How did it feel watching others have their rights taken away?
- Who could you speak to if someone was making you feel unsafe or uncomfortable?

Learning point:
Every child has rights, whatever their ethnicity, gender, religion, language, abilities or any other status. Nobody has the right to deny anyone else of their basic freedoms or rights and if anyone does, we should always let someone know so that we can get the help and support that we need.

This exercise was inspired by The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

Activity 5 – Support tree

Aim: To explore and signpost children and young people to appropriate channels of support.
Minimum suggested timing: 15-minutes
Group size: 5 – 30
Suggested age: 9 – 11 years old
Resources: Flipchart/sugar paper, coloured marker pens, leaf templates, scissors and glue

Instructions:
This exercise can be completed as a whole class, or in smaller groups if preferred.

On large pieces of paper pupils should draw the outline of a tree. As a whole group (or in smaller groups if preferred), ask participants to identify as many people or places that they can go to for support as possible. Each option should then be written on an individual leaf (pupils can create these themselves or you may wish to prepare some in advance) and stuck onto their tree.

You should then fill in any gaps. It is important to include examples both at school and out of school, and as many examples of 'safe' people as possible (including both family and non-family members). This is also an opportunity to make sure that pupils are aware of the safeguarding leads/team in their school and any other support services that may be available.

Asking for help is a very brave thing to do. We know that many young people initially choose friends as their go-to support network. It is important to emphasise that a child or young person should not feel that they have the responsibility - or the necessary skills or expertise – to solve any issues that they or their friends/family may be experiencing. Participants should always be signposted to appropriate adults and/or professional services should they need support for themselves or a friend:

- Parent/carer
- Teacher
- Trusted adult
- Helpline Card details and any appropriate local services
- Childline

Ask participants what they know about **Childline** and fill in any gaps in knowledge. It is important to give specific and detailed information:

- Childline is a 24-hour service for anyone up to the age of 19.
- Telephone number - 0800 1111.
- Childline is free to call and will not show up on any phone bill. It can also be accessed online: www.childline.org.uk and there is a free 1-2-1 chat function.
- They also offer Signvideo for those who are deaf or have a hearing impairment and would prefer to video chat with sign language.
- It is anonymous – Childline will not ask your name or pass any details on unless they feel there is an immediate risk to a young person's safety.
- You can call for advice either for yourself or a friend/relative.

The Support tree/s should be displayed in the classroom so that children can refer to them at a later date.

Support

The following is a list of support services for children and young people. Please refer to these after each relationships education lesson.

Childline:
Tel: 0800 1111 (24hrs) // www.childline.org.uk
Childline is the free and confidential 24-hour helpline for children and young people in the UK.

The following information can be useful to highlight when introducing this service to children and young people:

- Childline is a 24-hour service for anyone up to the age of 19.
- Telephone number - 0800 1111.

- Childline is free to call and will not show up on any phone bill. It can also be accessed online: www.childline.org.uk and there is a free 1-2-1 chat function.
- They also offer Signvideo for those who are deaf or have a hearing impairment and would prefer to video chat with sign language.
- It is anonymous – Childline will not ask your name or pass any details on unless they feel there is an immediate risk to a young person's safety.
- You can call for advice about anything, either for yourself or a friend/relative.

Thinkuknow:
Thinkuknow is the education programme from NCA-CEOP, a UK organisation which protects children both online and offline. They have several age-specific websites which give advice about staying safe when you're on a phone, tablet or computer. Resources are available online for children and young people between the ages of 4 – 18 years old, as well as for professionals working with children and young people and parent/carers: **www.thinkuknow.co.uk**

Additional statutory guidelines & advice

- **Relationships and sex education (RSE) and health education**: Statutory guidance on relationships education, relationships and sex education (RSE) and health education.[2]
- **Keeping Children Safe in Education**: Statutory guidance for schools and colleges on safeguarding children and safer recruitment.[3]
- **Working Together to Safeguard Children**: A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.[4]

[2] Relationships and sex education (RSE) and health education, Department for Education (2019)
[3] Keeping children safe in education, Department for Education (2022). This also includes Advice for schools and colleges on how to prevent and respond to reports of sexual violence and harassment between children, which was previously set out in separate guidance, Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges.
[4] Working Together to Safeguard Children, HM Government (2018)

Contextual information

This section of the toolkit contains detailed information to support educational professionals in understanding gender-based abuse, with contextual information and statistics to enable discussions. This is not intended as information to be shared directly with children. It provides staff with a foundation of understanding of the key issues and underscores the importance of addressing these topics in an age-appropriate way, as early and consistently as possible.

As the statistics in this toolkit will demonstrate, gender-based abuse is prevalent in society. It is therefore possible that professionals using this toolkit may have experienced or witnessed gender-based abuse and the material discussed may create uncomfortable or upsetting feelings. We acknowledge that this can be a difficult subject and would encourage the reader to take care and seek support if necessary. We have provided general information in the support section about services and organisations that may be of help and support to anyone in this situation.

We welcome any feedback or reflections you may have about how this toolkit has been used in your school or setting. Please feel free to share your feedback or any ideas you may have by emailing: **toolkit@tender.org.uk**.

Gender-based abuse/Violence Against Women and Girls

Definition of gender:

The World Health Organisation defines gender as: '... the characteristics of women, men, girls and boys that are socially constructed. This includes norms, behaviours and roles associated with being a woman, man, girl or boy, as well as relationships with each other. As a social construct, gender varies from society to society and can change over time. Gender is hierarchical and produces inequalities that intersect with other social and economic inequalities.'

Definition: Gender and health, World Health Organisation.

Definition of Violence Against Women and Girls:

The United Nations defined Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) in a 1993 declaration as:

‘Any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.

Source: Violence against women, World Health Organisation.

Gender-based abuse is a form of VAWG.

Definition of gender-based abuse

Gender-based violence (GBV) is where gender is the basis for violence carried out against a person and can include different forms of violence and abuse;

It includes acts that inflict physical, mental or sexual harm or suffering, threats of such acts, coercion and other deprivations of liberty’ It can include but isn’t limited to:

- **domestic abuse**
- **sexual violence and rape**
- **stalking and harassment**
- **trafficking of women**
- **female genital mutilation (often referred to as FGM)**
- **intimidation and harassment at work, in education or in public**
- **forced prostitution**
- **forced marriage**
- **so-called ‘honour crimes’**

Definition: IASC GBV Guidelines.

Within this section of the toolkit, we will be looking predominantly at domestic abuse, as well as other forms of gender-based abuse. You can find definitions of different forms of gender-based abuse below.

What is domestic abuse & why is it important to understand it?

Domestic Abuse definition

'Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender or sexuality.' This can encompass but is not limited to the following types of abuse:

- **Psychological and emotional** (regular and deliberate use of a range of words and non-physical actions used with the purpose to manipulate, hurt, weaken or frighten a person mentally and emotionally; and/or distort, confuse or influence a person's thoughts and actions within their everyday lives, changing their sense of self and harming their wellbeing).
- **Physical** (any form of physical harm such as hitting, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, restraining and ultimately death).
- **Sexual** (forcing or enticing the victim-survivor to take part in sexual activities, which may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. It may also include non-contact activities, such as being forced to watch sexual activities or take and send sexual images).
- **Financial or economic** (control over the other partner's access to economic resources, which diminishes the victim-survivor's capacity to support themselves and forces them to depend on the perpetrator financially).
- **Online** (this type of abuse is not part of the legal definition of domestic abuse, but Tender includes this when working with children, young people and adults to explore mobile phone and online technologies that can be used to harm others).

Domestic abuse also includes Coercive Control.

Coercive control is an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim-survivors. This controlling behaviour is designed to make a person dependent by isolating them from support, exploiting them, depriving them of independence and regulating their everyday behaviour. Coercive control creates invisible chains and a sense of fear that pervades all elements of a victim-survivor's life. It works to limit their human rights by depriving them of their liberty and reducing their ability for action.

The following alternatives are often used interchangeably with the term 'domestic abuse':

1. Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)
2. Dating violence
3. Domestic violence
4. Gender-based violence or Gender-based abuse
5. Gender violence/abuse

Young people often attribute the word "violence" to mean physical harm, so we would also encourage the use of the word "abuse".

Definition: New government domestic violence and abuse definition. UK Government.
The full, legal definition of Domestic Abuse can be found on the government website.

Victim-survivors will often be experiencing multiple types of abuse perpetrated against them, and these are underpinned by the perpetrator's desire for power and control, with coercion and control often present. Whilst coercive control can look very different for each person, there are some common behaviours to look out for. One of the key features of controlling relationships is 'isolation'. When a perpetrator has isolated their victim, it becomes easier to escalate abusive behaviour and to convince the victim-survivor that they're in the wrong. This isolation might be obvious if, for example, they are banning someone from seeing others or preventing them from going to school or work. It can also be quite subtle, for example when someone begins to drive a wedge between the victim-survivor and their friends.

These isolating tactics may then be combined with other subtle behaviours such as telling the victim-survivor what to wear, not allowing them to travel home from work or education on their own or being made fun of in front of peers. There are also some more obvious behaviours that the perpetrator may combine with isolation, such as degrading language, threats, displays of power, constant checking in, jealousy and blaming the victim for everything that goes wrong. When someone is exposed to these tactics while isolated from friends and family, it can be easy to believe that they are the problem and that nobody will want to help them. By considering the subtle ways that these kinds of behaviours can creep into a relationship, we can empower people to recognise signs of abuse from the beginning and avoid harm before it escalates. This kind of approach also helps to reduce attitudes that may blame victims or minimise examples of abuse that young people witness in their peer groups, enabling them to reach out for help at an earlier stage. This approach is key in Tender's work in secondary schools.

As mentioned above, when working with children and young people on this topic, we must not use examples of extreme physical or sexual abuse. This is particularly important when working with primary-age children. If we are concerned that these are being experienced by children or young people, it's important to raise safeguarding concerns and engage specialist professionals. This isn't a toolkit to support interventions in active cases of abuse and violence: it is designed to support preventative education and the creation of healthy environments at school that reject attitudes which minimise, tolerate or condone abuse. For everyday preventative approaches that support healthier relationships, we can focus on more basic themes of respect, equality, autonomy and empathy. Helping children and young people to understand what these mean in the context of their friendships or other relationships can have a huge impact on how they view and engage with relationships going forward.

However, within this toolkit, as it is directed at professionals, we will generally use legal terms such as 'domestic abuse' and 'sexual violence' as this is how the subject is more widely referred to in statutory documents and guidance you may come across. It is likely that young people will feel reluctant to report their experiences as domestic abuse as they feel this is more of an adult term. **MOPAC's Evidence and Insight team** report that there's an underrepresentation of young adults in police data compared with what is understood about their levels of victimisation from the Crime Survey of England and Wales (CSEW)[5]; that showed young people (16-24 years old) are at the highest risk of experiencing domestic abuse[6]. The fact that those aged 16 to 24 are most at risk from experiencing domestic abuse highlights the importance of teaching about healthy relationships and domestic abuse and embedding their understanding of warning signs and where to seek help at an early age, in the hope of preventing children and young people going on to experience or perpetrate abuse when they turn 16.

What does a 'gendered' approach mean?

Domestic abuse is a 'gendered' issue. This doesn't mean that it is only experienced by women and only perpetrated by men. It means that gender has a big impact on the way it is experienced and that we must keep gender in the conversation in order to properly understand it.

The Office for National Statistics survey data for the year ending March 2022 showed that in the year ending March 2022 the victim was female in 74.1% of domestic abuse-related crimes and 25% were male victims.[7] The same report also showed that two women a week are killed by a current or former partner[8]. Other major findings from this Crime Survey England and Wales report point to the wider prevalence and nuance of domestic abuse.[9]

[5] Beneath the Numbers: An exploration of the increases of recorded domestic abuse and sexual offences. MOPAC Evidence and Insight (2019).
[6] Domestic abuse victim characteristics, England and Wales: Year ending March 2022, Office for National Statistics (2022a, section 5): 7.4% of 16 – 19 year-olds and 10.2% of 20 – 24 year-olds are victims of domestic abuse.
[7] Domestic abuse victim characteristics, England and Wales: Year ending March 2022, Office for National Statistics (2022a, section 2).
[8] Domestic abuse victim characteristics, England and Wales, Office for National Statistics (2022a, Section 11). As noted in footnote 11, there are some limitations to this data. See also the Femicide Census for further context (Femicide Census 2020, Femicide Census). For more context, refer to pg. 24.
[9] Domestic abuse victim characteristics, England and Wales: year ending March 2022, Office for National Statistics (2022a, section 4).

1. **An estimated 6.9% of women (1.7 million) and 3.0% of men (699,000) experienced domestic abuse in the last year.**

2. **A higher proportion (10.2%) of adults aged 20 to 24 years were victims of any domestic abuse in the last year compared with adults aged 55 years and over[5].**

3. **A higher percentage of adults with a disability (10.3%) experienced domestic abuse in the last year than those without (4%).[10]**

The above statistics highlight the gender asymmetry in domestic abuse so it's not something we can ignore when addressing the issue. It doesn't mean that no men experience abuse, that women can't be violent or abusive, or that young men are not also hurt and victimised by hegemonic masculinity.

Hegemonic masculinity is a term that refers to the culturally dominant and socially acceptable ideal of masculinity. If a given society or context considers the ideal way for a man to behave to include aggression, machismo and power, this may be harmful for women who are expected to be submissive to this, but also to other men who don't fit this 'ideal' and who feel oppressed or who are bullied as a result.

Addressing how we talk about gender, and how gender stereotypes can make us feel like we should act in certain ways or tolerate certain attitudes, helps young people of all genders. Boys and young men who experience abuse may be less visible to services as they may feel that they can't speak up about it. As reported by the Office for National Statistics, crime survey statistics for the year up to March 2018 showed that 50.8% of men reported telling anyone about abuse, compared to 81.3% of female victims.[11]

MOPAC's Youth Voice Survey 2021-2022[12] conducted by MOPACs Evidence and Insight team asked approximately 12,000 14–16-year-olds about their attitudes towards sexual harassment and domestic abuse behaviours. Of those surveyed, 20% of young people felt it may be acceptable to insult a partner (down from 24% in the Youth Survey conducted in 2018), and 4% felt it is okay to push a partner (down from 6% in 2015). 13% felt it is always/sometimes okay to make sexual

[10] The next highest prevalence was reported amongst the 16-19 age group (7.4%) followed by the 35-44 age-group (5.7%).
[11] Core sample size of 34,715 households. Partner abuse in detail, England and Wales: year ending March 2018, Office for National Statistics (2022b, section 7).
[12] MOPAC Youth Survey 2021-2022

comments or jokes about people (down from 23% in 2018). Although these attitudes are reported by a minority, it still points to the prevalence of unhealthy mindsets among young people. This data is crucial for educators to tailor and target healthy relationship interventions in schools and other settings. It also indicates why it is important to start conversations about relationships and equality early, at primary school age.

Other findings from the Youth Voice Survey 2021-2022 demonstrate the prevalence of gender-based abuse amongst young people, with 51% reporting they have experienced unwanted staring. 29% them have experienced wolf-whistling, and 29% received unwanted sexual comments and jokes of a sexual nature. The figures show a similar picture in scenarios of online abuse: a quarter had either been bullied online or been send nude or sexual content. The same report also cites that young females experienced sexual harassment more than young males. Young people who had sought support were most likely to say they had spoken to friends or family (79%, 212 of 270), with one in five saying they had told someone at school or a teacher (19%, 51 of 270). However, far fewer said they had spoken to the police (9%, 23 of 270) or to a dedicated organisation or charity (4%, 12 of 270). Overall, less than a quarter of those who experienced sexual harassment spoke about it to someone else, demonstrating the continuing work that needs to be done to ensure young people experience and are part of challenging gender-based abuse and have confidence in where to go for more information and support.

Children and domestic abuse

The UK definition of domestic abuse includes young people aged 16 or over. However, it's important to note that children younger than this can experience abuse in their friendships and relationships and that the values and attitudes which may minimise or condone abuse can be formed earlier than this as well. Supporting children to navigate relationships safely can prepare them to identify, avoid or escape from abusive situations they may currently be experiencing, or could potentially experience in the future.

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 changed the way that children growing up in abusive households are recognised. Previously, a child was considered to be a witness of abuse if they were not directly targeted by the perpetrator. However, the significant impact of growing up in a home in which abuse is a feature, whether or not that abuse is directly experienced or seen by the child, has been recognised as a crucial issue to confront. As such, children affected by domestic

abuse are now automatically treated as victims regardless of whether they were present during violent incidents.

The Crown Prosecution Service have provided information and guidance on how the new legislation impacts **response to children in further detail.**

The full legislation can be found here: **Domestic Abuse Act 2021.**

The United Nations on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) defines a child as everyone under 18 unless, 'under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.'

[13]

Sexual violence and harassment

Sexual violence and sexual harassment can occur between two children, young people or adults of any age and gender. It can also occur through a group of children or young people sexually assaulting or sexually harassing a single child/young person or group of children/young people. Evidence from Ofsted's 2021 review of sexual abuse in schools and colleges found that 79% of girls and 38% boys think sexual assault happens 'a lot' or 'sometimes' amongst people their age[14]. Children and young people who are victim-survivors of sexual violence and sexual harassment will likely find the experience stressful and distressing. This will, in all likelihood, adversely affect their educational attainment. Sexual violence and sexual harassment exist on a continuum and may overlap; they can occur online and offline (both physical and verbal) and are never acceptable. It is important that all victim-survivors are taken seriously and offered support.

[13] Convention on the rights of the child, United Nations (1989).
[14] Review of sexual abuse in schools and colleges, Ofsted (2021).

Legal definitions of sexual violence

Whilst it is often not useful or productive to discuss the law in detail with young people, because it can distract from key learning points, it is useful for professionals to be aware of legislation as a referral point in discussion. When referring to sexual violence we are referring to sexual violence offences under the Sexual Offences Act 2003 as described below:

Rape: A person (A) commits an offence of rape if: they intentionally penetrate the vagina, anus or mouth of another person (B) with their penis, B does not consent to the penetration and A does not reasonably believe that B consents. 'Stealthing' is when a sexual partner removes a condom during sex non-consensually and is considered rape by UK law.

Assault by Penetration: A person (A) commits an offence if: s/he intentionally penetrates the vagina or anus of another person (B) with a part of her/his body or anything else, the penetration is sexual, B does not consent to the penetration and A does not reasonably believe that B consents.

Sexual Assault: A person (A) commits an offence of sexual assault if: s/he intentionally touches another person (B), the touching is sexual, B does not consent to the touching and A does not reasonably believe that B consents.

Some important facts from the London Rape Review 2021

- **66%** of cases end in victim withdrawal
- A further **25%** end in police 'No Further Action'
- Only **6%** of cases are committed by a complete stranger
- **35%** are committed by a current/former partner, **29%** by an acquaintance/friend
- Most offences take place in a private setting **(59%)**

The London Rape Review 2021. An examination of cases from 2017-2019.
MOPAC, December 2019.

Source: Rape and Sexual Offences Act (2003).

Rape Crisis define sexual harassment as:

In England and Wales, the legal definition of sexual harassment is when someone carries out unwanted sexual behaviour towards another person that makes them feel upset, scared, offended or humiliated.

It is also when someone carries out this behaviour with the intention of making someone else feel that way. This means that it can still be sexual harassment even if the other person didn't feel upset, scared, offended or humiliated.

The Equality Act 2010 says someone sexually harasses another person if they:
Engage in unwanted conduct of a sexual nature and the conduct has the purpose or effect of either violating the other person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them.
This unwanted sexual conduct can happen in person, on the phone, by text or email, or online. Both the harasser and the victim or survivor can be of any gender.

Sexual harassment includes a really wide range of behaviours, such as:

Sexual comments or noises – for example, catcalling or wolf-whistling.
Sexual gestures.
Leering, staring or suggestive looks. This can include looking someone up and down.
Sexual 'jokes'.
Sexual innuendos or suggestive comments.
Unwanted sexual advances or flirting.
Sexual requests or asking for sexual favours.
Sending emails or texts with sexual content – for example, unwanted 'sexts' or 'dick pics'.
Sexual posts or contact on social media.
Intrusive questions about a person's private or sex life.
Someone discussing their own sex life.
Commenting on someone's body, appearance or what they're wearing.
Spreading sexual rumours.
Standing close to someone.
Displaying images of a sexual nature.
Unwanted physical contact of a sexual nature – for example, brushing up against someone or hugging, kissing or massaging them.
Stalking.
Indecent exposure.
Taking a photo or video under another person's clothing – what is known as 'upskirting'.

Sexual harassment is a form of unlawful discrimination under the Equality Act 2010.

Source: What is sexual harassment? Rape Crisis England & Wales.

It's worth noting that the London Rape Review[15] also reported that the majority of victims who reported rape to police were female and aged between 19-29 years old, with over 30% of victims being under the age of 18. The report also suggests that in the majority of cases, there is intersectionality with domestic abuse. Over one third of the suspects had a history of offending which offers a crucial insight from a prevention-education perspective. 40% of the suspects had a history of sexual offending or domestic abuse. 100% of the suspects were male, the majority of the suspects were in the 30-49 age group followed by 33% in the 19-29 age group.

Underreporting of rape is a significant problem. The CSEW demonstrates that 5 in 6 (83%) of victims of sexual assaults did not report their experience to police.[16] Some reasons for this underreporting include: myths about what 'real rape' is; fear of retaliation; concerns for privacy; feelings of shame; or a lack of trust in the criminal justice system. It's important to consider these barriers when creating policy in schools around responses to sexual offences to ensure that students will feel safe and supported if they need to disclose. Whilst creating policy, consider the age of criminal responsibility. If an act outlined above is committed by a student under the age of ten, it will be responded to differently by external agencies, including police, due to lack of criminal responsibility. Regardless of age of those involved, language is important; we should avoid labelling children through the lens of crime, using language such as 'a child who has committed a harmful sexual behaviour' as opposed to 'has perpetrated a crime' or 'is a perpetrator'.

Professionals should be aware that some groups are potentially more at risk of experiencing sexual violence. Evidence shows that people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and LGBT+ people are at greater risk. Data released by the Office for National Statistics from the CSEW showed that, in the year ending March 2019, women with disabilities were almost twice as likely to have experienced any type of sexual assault.[17] A recent report by Galop summarises key findings from their research involving 1020 LGBT+ people. According to the report, a majority of the respondents had experienced sexual harassment (88%) and sexual assault (77%) since the age of 18. The study also found that most of the survivors (79%) were abused by someone known to them and about one-third of these abuses were perpetrated by a partner or an ex-partner.[18]

[15] The London Rape Review 2021, MOPAC.
[16] Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG). MOPAC Evidence & Insight (June 2019).
[17] Disability and crime, UK. Office for National Statistics (2019, section 6).
[18] Sexual violence: A snapshot of those harming LGBT+ people, Galop.

Professionals should be aware of the importance of:

- **Making clear that sexual violence and sexual harassment is not acceptable, will never be tolerated and is not an inevitable part of growing up.**

- **Not tolerating or dismissing sexual violence or sexual harassment as 'banter', 'part of growing up', 'just having a laugh' or 'boys being boys.'**

- **Challenging behaviours (potentially criminal in nature), such as grabbing bottoms, breasts and genitalia, flicking bras and lifting up skirts. Dismissing or tolerating such behaviours risks normalising them. These behaviours may appear as younger children begin to notice and explore their bodies and the differences between them and their peers. It's important that children are enabled to understand their own boundaries, and those of others, in a caring way.**

- **Increasing knowledge about healthy stages of sexual development and responding to indicators of harmful sexual behaviour.**

This guide from the NSPCC which was based on Hackett's continuum of sexual behaviours is useful for improving understanding of what behaviours are developmentally normal for children and what needs to be addressed as a safeguarding concern: **Understanding Sexualised Behaviour in Children.**

Consent can be a difficult issue to discuss with children and young people, but it is essential, nonetheless. Rape and sexual assault can occur without the victim-survivor saying 'no' – there are other reasons why they may be unable to give consent: they may be incapacitated by alcohol or drugs, or they may feel intimidated or pressured to say 'yes'. Everybody has the right to change their mind about giving consent at any time. Giving consent once does not assume consent every time. It is also important to remember that a child can never consent to being abused by a perpetrator over the age of 16.

What is consent?

The Sexual Offences Act 2003 says that someone consents to sexual activity if they:

Agree by choice and
Have both the freedom and capacity to make that choice.

Consent to sexual activity may be given to one sort of sexual activity but not another, e.g., to vaginal but not anal sex, or penetration with conditions such as wearing a condom. Consent can be withdrawn at any time during sexual activity and each time activity occurs. Someone consents to vaginal, anal or oral penetration only if they agree by choice to that penetration and have the freedom and capacity to make that choice.

The age of consent in the UK is 16 years old. This is the age when young people can legally take part in sexual activity regardless of their sex or gender. Although children over the age of 16 can legally consent to sexual activity, the law gives extra protection to anyone who is under 18 years old as they may still be vulnerable to harm through an abusive sexual relationship.

It is illegal to:

- take, show or distribute indecent photographs of a child under the age of 18 (this includes images shared through sexting or sharing nudes)
- sexually exploit a child under the age of 18 for a person in a position of trust (for example teachers or care workers)
- engage in sexual activity with anyone under the age of 18 who is in the care of their organisation.

Sexual harassment and bullying

When referring to sexual harassment and bullying we mean 'unwanted conduct of a sexual nature' that can occur online and offline, and when sexuality or gender is used as a weapon. Sexual harassment and bullying are likely to: violate a student's dignity, and/or make them feel intimidated, degraded or humiliated and/or create a hostile, offensive or sexualised environment. These behaviours also contribute to an environment where certain sexualities, genders or gender presentations are seen as lesser than others. An atmosphere of bullying can encourage children and young people to engage in more aggressive or abusive tactics against others in order to shield themselves from being victimised themselves. In this way, young people can impact on the environment they're in and the environment can impact on them.[19]

[19] Firmin, C., 2018. Abuse between young people: a contextual account. Routledge, London New York.

Whilst not intended to be an exhaustive list, sexual harassment and bullying can include:

- Sexual comments, such as: telling sexual stories, making lewd comments, making sexual remarks about clothes and appearance and calling someone sexualised names.
- Sexual "jokes" or taunting.
- Stalking someone
- Physical behaviour, such as: deliberately brushing against someone, interfering with someone's clothes (schools and colleges should be considering when any of this crosses a line into sexual violence - it is important to talk to and consider the experience of the victim-survivor) and displaying pictures, photos or drawings of a sexual nature.
- Online sexual harassment. This may be standalone, or part of a wider pattern of sexual harassment and/or sexual violence. It may include:
    - Non-consensual sharing of sexual images and videos.
    - Sexualised online bullying.
    - Unwanted sexual comments and messages, including, on social media.
    - Sexual exploitation; coercion and threats.
    - Upskirting - typically involves someone taking a picture under another person's clothing without their knowledge, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks (with or without underwear).

As mentioned in the 'domestic abuse' section, when discussing these issues with children and young people, you don't need to provide examples of serious sexual violence in order to have an impact. As this toolkit details, you can begin by discussing what it means to feel comfortable, to allow someone their space and to recognise our own and others' boundaries. Giving children and young people a safe space to have those discussions, and to recognise that they are allowed to draw their own lines, can support their ability to speak up when they don't feel comfortable. Some children may feel that they need to go along with things, whether that's jokes in the hallways or sexual activity, or they risk being ostracised by their friends. When a safe discussion is opened, groups get a chance to see that the majority of their peers are in support of everyone being able to be comfortable and safe. The message that sexism and harassment are acceptable and just 'banter' may feel really loud at times, but when we give children and young people the chance to disclose their real feelings, we can raise the volume of those who believe it's not okay. This gives everyone permission to ask for help and to reject behaviours that create an unsafe space.

When discussing harassment and sexualised bullying, it is easy to assume this is something that only impacts older children and young people, however research

shows that it can significantly impact primary aged children as well. Research from The Guardian found that in 2006-7, 3,500 students were suspended for sexual bullying, 1/3 of which were from primary schools.[20]

Keeping Children Safe in Education in 2022 stated that sexual bullying can lead to mental/physical health problems, low self-esteem, substance abuse, lower participation in the classroom, loss of concentration and lower academic achievement.[21] It goes on to state that tolerance of these incidents can lead to more sexual bullying, and potentially worse behaviours.[22]

Stalking

Stalking is fixated, obsessive, unwanted and repeated behaviour that makes someone feel pestered and harassed, causing them to live in a state of fear and anxiety. It includes behaviour that happens two or more times, directed at or towards someone by another person; this could be a partner, ex-partner, friend, family member, colleague or a stranger. Cyberstalking is when a perpetrator repeatedly monitors and harasses someone using computers or mobile phones via the internet, email, instant messaging, text messaging, or over social networking sites.

[20] 3,500 pupils suspended for sexual bullying, The Guardian (2009)
[21] Keeping Children Safe in Education, Department of Education (2022, p. 107).
[22] Keeping Children Safe in Education, Department of Education (2022, p. 107).

What does the legislation say about stalking?

The Protection of Freedoms Act 2012 includes a list of possible behaviours but isn't exhaustive:

- regularly following a person
- contacting, or attempting to contact, a person by any means
- repeatedly turning up where someone lives, goes to school or regularly visits
- identity theft (signing up to services, buying things in someone's name)
- publishing any statement or other material relating or implying to relate to a person, or suggesting it originated from a person
- monitoring or tracking when and how someone uses the internet, email or any other form of electronic communication, including frequent commenting or posting on someone's social media profiles
- interfering with any property in the possession of a person
- watching or spying on a person

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It's important not to dismiss these behaviours if the victim knows the person. It is still stalking and is still an offence. Just like when we were exploring domestic abuse, stalking is often characterised by a 'pattern' of behaviours rather than by particular incidents. This means that sometimes, when someone discloses a part of what's happening (e.g. that they saw the perpetrator walking past the shop they work in at the weekends), it can be easy for others to brush it off and say it's not a big deal. However, if we understood that this person also commented on all of their social media posts, called and hung up on them multiple times a day, showed up at the school gates repeatedly and approached many of their friends to get information, we would see that it's becoming an alarming pattern of behaviour. It's important not to minimise the experience. If a child or young person is feeling worried, that's enough information to flag a cause for concern. While the majority of stalking is perpetrated by adults, stalking among young people[24] is still a concern, particularly when we consider the access that we now have to one another via social media and mobile phones.

Children and young people may also be the victim of campaigns of cyberbullying which can take over their lives. It's important to have discussions with children about the effect their behaviour can have on others and to remind them that what they say online has a real-life impact. Additionally, children and their access to education or attendance at school are often used as a tool by adult perpetrators to stalk the victim-survivor. It is therefore important to remain aware of stalking

[23] Stalking and Harassment, CPS.
[24] Standing Against Stalking: Supporting Young People, Suzy Lamplugh Trust (April 2023).

and the potential negative impacts it can have on children and young people who experience it through parents/carers.

Sharing explicit images

There are different kinds of image sharing that may take place between children and young people. It may be a consensual act between young people in a relationship (although not legal, see below) or it may be a result of coercion or an act of exploitation where an image is used to blackmail or humiliate someone.

For anyone under the age of 18, sending a naked image of themselves via text message or social media is illegal, whether it was consensual or exploitative. It counts as an offence of distributing an indecent image of a child and is something they could receive a police caution for. They could even be listed on the sex offender's register. The law doesn't distinguish between an indecent image of a young person's own body and an indecent image of someone else. Even though the age of sexual consent is 16, the age for distributing indecent images is 18. That means that a 17-year-old who can legally have sex cannot legally send a naked image. As detailed below in 'Child Sexual Exploitation', a child or young person could also be pressured and coerced into creating and sending an explicit image. There are other laws that cover the sending of indecent images, for example, if someone sends a naked image of themselves to someone who is likely to be upset by it. This could be considered a crime under the Malicious Communications Act 2003.

When teaching about this issue, our instinct is often to focus the message on how children and young people shouldn't send images in the first place. While it's important that children and young people understand the risks, research from Dr. Jenny Lloyd at the Contextual Safeguarding Network[24] has shown that when we only focus on this message, we can encourage victim blaming ideas. If someone does have an image distributed widely, their peers feel it's their fault and the victim doesn't feel that they can tell anyone as they're the one to blame. Dr. Lloyd's research suggests that schools should focus on preventative education that has a greater focus on the abusive and exploitative sharing and distributing of images, rather than just on not taking them in the first place. It is also vital that schools highlight that if images are shared, they will first and foremost support the

[24] Lloyd, J., 2020. Abuse through sexual image sharing in schools: Response and responsibility. Gender and Education 32, 784–802.

children or young people involved, whether images were initially shared consensually or not.[25]

Although this practice may be more common between older children, an increasing number of primary aged children have smart phones. Images like this are often shared amongst peers without understanding the severity of the issue, or sometimes found through social media sites such as discord, or via older siblings. It is therefore important that this topic is approached with primary aged children, in an age-appropriate way.

Image-based sexual abuse

Image-based sexual abuse - previously referred to as 'revenge porn' - is not simply about revenge, 'it is about power, control and humiliation'.[26] Image-based sexual abuse is the sharing of private, sexual materials, either photos or videos, of another person without their consent and with the purpose of causing embarrassment, distress or harm. The offence applies both online and offline; for example, sharing by text and e-mail, or showing someone a physical or electronic image. This offence has previously been prosecuted using a range of existing laws such as the Communications Act 2003 and the Malicious Communications Act 1988. However, as of 2015, there is a specific offence for this practice, and those found guilty of the crime could face a sentence of up to two years in prison[27]. The new offence criminalises the sharing of private, sexual photographs or films, where what is shown would not usually be seen in public. Sexual material not only covers images that show the genitals, but also anything that a reasonable person would consider to be sexual, so this could be a picture of someone who is engaged in sexual behaviour or posing in a sexually provocative way. The "right to be forgotten" can protect victim-survivors of image-based sexual abuse and in 2015 Google took a stance against image-based sexual abuse, stating that it honours requests to remove intimate images and videos shared without the consent of subjects from its search results.

Again, although this practice is more common amongst older children, with an increasing number of primary aged children having access to online platforms, there are incidences where this happens. It is important that we remain aware of this issue and discuss it with younger children in an age-appropriate way.

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[25] Lloyd, J., [Contextual Safeguarding] (2019) *Sexting in schools: responses to abuse through image sharing* [Video]. Vimeo.
[26] 5 things you should know about Scotland's new law on image based abuse, Scottish Women's Rights Centre news blog (2017).
[27] 'Revenge porn' victims are often stalked and harassed by ex-partners, CPS (2022).

Child Sexual Exploitation

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) is a form of child sexual abuse and is when an individual or group coerces, manipulates and/or deceives a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the child needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator/s.[28] According to the Lighthouse Evaluation Report[29], in 2021,1891 offences were flagged as child sexual abuse, a staggering 20% increase from the previous year. The same report also highlighted that 4357 sexual offences involved a victim aged under 16, an 18% increase from the previous year. This year also saw a 55% increase in CSE offences, indicating a rising trend in offences committed against children. CSE does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology. It often starts with online or offline 'grooming' as defined by the NSPCC here:

Grooming is when someone builds a relationship, trust and emotional connection with a child or young person so they can manipulate, exploit and abuse them. Children and young people who are groomed can be sexually abused, exploited or trafficked.[30]

Like all forms of child sex abuse, CSE:

- can affect any child or young person under the age of 18 years, including 16- and 17-year-olds who can legally consent to have sex.
- is still abuse even if the sexual activity appears consensual.
- can include both contact (penetrative and non-penetrative acts) and noncontact sexual activity.
- can take place in person or via technology, or a combination of both.
- can involve force and/or enticement-based methods of compliance and may, or may not, be accompanied by abuse or threats of abuse.
- may occur without the child or young person's immediate knowledge (e.g., through others copying videos or images they have created and posted on social media).
- can be perpetrated by individuals or groups, males or females, and children or adults.

The abuse can be a one-off occurrence or a series of incidents over time, can range from opportunistic to complex organised abuse, and is typified by some

[28] Child sexual exploitation: definition and guide for practitioners, Department for Education (2017).
[29] The Lighthouse: Final evaluation report, MOPAC Evidence & Insight (2021).
[30] Grooming, NSPCC.

form of power imbalance in favour of those perpetrating the abuse. Whilst age may be the most obvious, this power imbalance can also be due to a range of other factors including gender, sexual identity, cognitive ability, physical strength, status, and access to economic or other resources.

Some of the following signs may be indicators of CSE:

- **children who appear with unexplained gifts or new possessions.**
- **children who associate with other young people involved in exploitation.**
- **children who have older boyfriends or girlfriends.**
- **children who suffer from sexually transmitted infections or become pregnant.**
- **children who suffer from changes in emotional wellbeing.**
- **children who misuse drugs and alcohol.**
- **children who go missing for periods of time or regularly come home late.**
- **children who regularly miss school or education or do not take part in education.**[31]

Intersectionality

Intersectionality is a theoretical framework for understanding power and oppression through the socio-historical and political struggles of black resistance and liberation movements, originally developed through critical, black, feminist activism.[32]

Kimberlé Crenshaw[33] identified that a person's interactions with the world are not just solely based on one aspect of their identity, but are layered and multifaceted interactions in which racism, sexism, ableism, classism, and homophobia are experienced simultaneously. When working with groups of children or young people, they won't all have experienced these issues in the same way. It is important that the materials and case studies that we use to teach represent the diversity of the class group and that young people have the opportunity to explain their own perspectives and how they experience things differently.

[31] Keeping children safe in education 2022, Department for Education (2022, p. 142).
[32] The Combahee River Collective Statement, Combahee River Collective (1979).
[33] Crenshaw, K., (1991) Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color. Stanford Law Review, Vol. 43, No. 6, pp. 1241-1299.

It's important for us to understand that for some people who experience many layers of oppression, this can seriously increase the barriers they face.

For example, Dominique is a 6-year-old girl with autism. She struggles to communicate and uses pictures and Makaton to support her. Dominque has difficulty disclosing her emotions or identifying when behaviours are not right. Dominque begins to display more challenging behaviours at school, particularly when around certain students. You talk to Dominique, who does not disclose anything is going on. You decide to observe Dominique on breaks and outside of the classroom, and you notice that two other students in the classroom are touching her inappropriately. This includes touching her bottom and genitals over her trousers and laughing. Dominque was visibly showing her distress towards these student's actions, but they did not stop. When looking at this with an intersectional lens, Dominque is experiencing multiple oppressions such as sexism and ableism. Her experience and ability to seek support are impacted by her oppressions, creating barriers through social inequalities.

Those who experience multiple avenues of oppression can sometimes be accused of being unsatisfied with any solutions that are offered to them. Inappropriate or tokenistic solutions risk being provided when we don't take time to fully consider the needs of particular individuals or communities. As such, we should always aim to explore any issues around accessibility or inclusion through an intersectional lens.

The adultification of Black girls is also an issue that professionals working with young people need to be aware of. Black girls can often be oversexualised or given too much responsibility to protect themselves rather than be protected, due to being perceived as older than they are. Black boys are often criminalised or considered as more aggressive than their white counterparts despite displaying similar behaviour. Both mean black children and young people are not afforded the same protection. Whilst domestic abuse can impact the lives of people of all backgrounds, our society does not treat all victims of abuse equally. We encourage you to remain informed and aware of the various combined oppressions victim-survivors may encounter. In particular, those from minoritised and marginalised backgrounds, where racism and other forms of discrimination are likely to impact how some victim-survivors are seen or unseen. As professionals, we must remain empathetic to combined oppressions and identify as well as challenge our own unconscious and conscious biases so we can support and protect children and young people. For more information see the support services section of this toolkit.

Support services

The following is a list of **support services** for young people aged 16+ or any adults who may have been impacted by the issues highlighted in this toolkit.

Please note that whilst you can seek professional advice from these organisations, your school/setting's safeguarding procedures should take priority and be followed at all times.

National Domestic Abuse Helpline - Refuge

Tel: 0808 2000 247 (24hrs) // www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk

You can call the National Domestic Abuse Helpline for free and in confidence, 24-hours a day. You can also contact them online via a live chat function (Monday – Friday, 3pm – 10pm).

Men's Advice Line

Tel: 0808 801 0327 (Monday – Friday, 10am-8pm) // www.mensadviceline.org.uk

A confidential helpline for male victims of domestic abuse and those supporting them.

Galop – the LGBT+ anti-abuse charity

Tel: 0800 999 5428 (Monday - Friday, 10am–5pm, Wednesday and Thursday, 10am–8pm) // www.galop.org.uk

Galop is the only national helpline for LGBT+ victims and survivors of abuse and violence, and their family and friends.

Rape Crisis

Tel: 0808 500 2222 // www.rapecrisis.org.uk

Rape Crisis England & Wales is an organisation that supports victim-survivors of sexual violence and abuse. They run a 24/7 Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Line and their website also contains lots of useful information and further support options. You can also find signposting to local support services that operate under the Rape Crisis umbrella.

Victim Support

Tel: 0808 168 9111 (24hrs) // www.victimsupport.org.uk

Victim Support is an independent charity dedicated to supporting victims of crime and traumatic incidents in England and Wales. You can call their Supportline for free 24-hours a day, or access support online.

National Stalking Helpline

Tel: 0808 802 0300 (Monday and Wednesday, 9.30am – 8pm and Tuesday, Thursday, Friday, 9.30am – 4pm) // www.suzylamplugh.org

Operated by the Suzy Lamplugh Trust, the National Stalking Helpline gives practical information, support, and advice on risk, safety planning and legislation to victims of

stalking, their friends, family, and professionals working with victims. You can also contact them via email.

The following is a useful list of resources for further information on intersectional approaches to VAWG:

Imkaan

Tel: 020 7842 8525 (Monday – Friday, 10am – 5pm) // www.imkaan.org.uk

Imkaan is the only UK-based, umbrella women's organisation dedicated to addressing violence against Black and Minoritised women and girls - i.e., women which are defined in policy terms as Black and 'Minority Ethnic' (BME). They are at the forefront of programmes and initiatives relating to forms of violence that disproportionately affect Black and minoritised women and girls and their research activities support the ongoing development of a robust evidence base around the needs and aspirations of Black and minoritised women and girls. Whilst Imkaan are not a direct service provider, and are therefore unable to offer individual advice or support, you can visit their 'get help' page for a detailed list of national support services: **www.imkaan.org.uk/get-help**

Listen Up

www.listenupresearch.org

Listen up is an organisation that amplifies the experiences of marginalised and minoritised children and young people, conducting research and providing comprehensive guidance on embedding intersectionality and systemic thinking in all areas of child protective practice and policy.

Limitations

The data provided in this report is accurate to the best of our knowledge as of September 2023. But wherever the figures have been updated, seem incorrect or the source link is unavailable, please get in touch with Tender as soon as possible by emailing **toolkit@tender.org.uk.** This toolkit will be reviewed annually, and the authors will endeavour to update statements and statistics where new data and evidence are available.

The report is not guided by an exhaustive literature review. The statistics in this toolkit should be used in a descriptive rather than a prescriptive capacity. Please take steps to make sure that the statistics are shared and understood in the context of the studies from where they are derived, which are cited in footnotes and in the reference list at the end of this document.

The statistics used in this toolkit are produced separately by different organisations, but each provides only a partial picture, owing to their research motivations and priorities. As the research design differs between sources and organisations, caution must be made while referencing and using this information. The data are not directly comparable, since they are collected on different sources using different timescales and reference periods. They may not necessarily cover the same cohort of cases.

Wherever possible, the data has been supported with a detailed explanation to acknowledge other relevant considerations. Where such an explanation is not possible due to word limits, the data source has been linked appropriately for reference.