Addressing relationship abuse with young people aged 16 - 18

Introduction

This guidance is intended to support teachers to address relationship abuse with young people aged 16 to 18.

It is strongly recommended that this work is integrated into a wider developmental PSHE education programme and not used as a 'one off' learning experience which at best may raise awareness but offer little to enable young people to manage any potential or actual abuse they may experience.

Context

Considerations for this age group - Before starting, it is important to consider the relevant prior learning experienced by the young people throughout their PSHE education programme and wider curriculum. Much of PSHE education in the earlier key stages focuses on developing the understanding, language, strategies, skills and attributes needed to make decisions or manage events that lie in their future.

Here, we build on and connect this prior learning to the issue of abuse in relationships. However, it is important to recognise that it is likely that many 16 to 18 year olds will be in, or have already experienced, intimate relationships. PSHE education lessons that have previously explored healthy relationships may now be more immediately relevant and it is therefore appropriate to revisit and reinforce learning from previous years.

Through undertaking this work, young people may realise they or those they care about are in unhealthy or abusive relationships, or may recognise that a previous relationship or experience was abusive and wish to discuss them. A negotiated working agreement or ground rules that include not sharing personal stories will help to discourage young people from making any personal disclosure during a lesson or tutorial. However, it is vital that the teacher/facilitator clearly outlines the policy in their setting for handling disclosures and clearly signposts sources of support within the setting, locally and nationally. Safeguarding protocols should always be followed if a young person is deemed vulnerable or at risk.

The 'audience' - There are three 'groups' we need to consider.

- Young people who may be in, or who may find themselves in abusive relationships in the future;

- Young people whose own behaviour within relationships may be abusive

- Young people who now or in the future may recognise when others, especially those they care about, are experiencing abuse.

It is unlikely that perpetrators of abuse will spontaneously stop their behaviour and vulnerable young people who are experiencing abuse may feel unable or unwilling to get support. For this reason, it is particularly important to focus on the third group.

Prior learning - It is important that this work builds on a comprehensive exploration of what constitutes a healthy relationship before considering abuse within relationships. Before addressing these issues, it is strongly advised that prior learning will have included:

- The features of healthy, equal relationships

- Consent (See PSHE Association guidance on teaching about consent)

- Recognising and managing pressure, control and all forms of bullying

- Rights and responsibilities within relationships

- Diversity in gender and sexual orientation, anti-HBT bullying, gender equality and inclusivity

Key messages when addressing abuse in relationships with the 16 – 18 age group

– Some behaviours in relationships are universally unacceptable whilst other behaviours may be unacceptable to an individual. A healthy relationship recognises that individuals have the right to decide what is unacceptable to them and that there is no need to justify this to another. Young people should be aware of the law in relation to sexual behaviour and controlling behaviour (see Resource E of the Disrespect Nobody discussion guide (13-16)).

– Consent is central to a healthy relationship. In healthy relationships both parties respectfully seek agreement from one another, regularly check that consent is still being given and respect when it is not. The person seeking consent is responsible (ethically and legally) for ensuring that consent is given by another person, and for ensuring that the person has the freedom and capacity to do so.

– No one should ever have to do something sexual that they don't feel comfortable with, even if others are comfortable with similar behaviours or situations. Any agreement that is brought about by wearing the other person down, intimidation, physical threats or emotional threats is not consent. Pressurising someone to do something they do not want to, or who hasn't given their consent, is never acceptable for any reason.

– Sex with someone who has not given their consent is rape. It does not make a difference whether the people know each other or not, or what relationship they have. If a woman has sex or does something sexual with another woman who didn't want to and didn't give consent, this is 'sexual assault'. It might have a different name, but the crime and the consequences for both the victim and the perpetrator are still very serious. Rape does not have to involve physical force: threatening violence, or having sex with someone who is incapable of consenting (for example because they're drunk or asleep) is rape.

– Pornography can give young people an unrealistic expectation of what sex is like, which can have a damaging effect on their lives and relationships. Abusers may use pornography to justify their demands for compliance. No one should be pressured into doing something they don't feel comfortable with, or acting or looking like someone in pornography.

– Abuse can take a variety of forms including physical, sexual, emotional, psychological and economic abuse. It may manifest in behaviours such as verbal or physical aggression; exercising control over or limiting another's freedoms, social life, education or career, or attempting to diminish another's self-worth, for example, through constant criticism. Abuse is never 'OK' nor should it be 'excused' by blaming anger, alcohol, jealousy or another's behaviour.

– Abuse is fundamentally about power and exercising power over another. At its most extreme it may involve physical or sexual assault, rape or murder. Abuse however need not be 'extreme' but may be a long term, insidious feature of a relationship and with a huge impact on the recipient. Perpetrators can be skilled in balancing their abusive behaviour with caring behaviours to maintain the relationship.

– Perpetrators of abuse may wait until a relationship has been established and their partner has emotionally invested in the relationship before commencing their abusive behaviour. This can cause confusion for the recipient and possibly lead to denial or self-blame. It can also make it more difficult to leave or end a relationship.

– Perpetrators of abuse may be careful to ensure their behaviour is not witnessed in public to isolate the other person from any support their peer group or family may offer.

(It is therefore important to help young people recognise signs that others are being abused either through witnessing inappropriate behaviour or recognising another's anxiety or distress. It is important to ensure these young people have both the understanding, strategies and skills required to offer support and to recognise the imperative of intervening either directly or indirectly.)

– Understanding when it is appropriate to keep a confidence and when it is necessary to break a confidence and act is never easy, however the safety of the person about whom someone is concerned should be the priority. Sometimes being a good friend means breaking a confidence.

– When a person under the age of 18 is persuaded, coerced or forced into sexual activity in exchange for, amongst other things, money, drugs/alcohol, gifts, affection or status, then this is sexual exploitation. It is a form of abuse. Consent is irrelevant, even if you believe you are voluntarily taking part in sexual activity with the other person. Sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact and may occur online.

Principles of best practice

Space to explore the complexities – Real-life relationships are complex and helping young people navigate them safely requires more than simply offering a list of '*do and don'ts*'. For example, although there are risks, there is a difference between the willing sharing of sexual images between two people who trust, care and take responsibility for one another and a person putting pressure on their unwilling partner to provide such a similar image. It is the nature of the relationship as much as the behaviour that constitutes the risk. There are laws concerning the sharing of sexual images of underage young people and these should be clearly understood (see UKCCIS guidance: Sexting in schools and colleges: Responding to incidents and safeguarding young people). These complexities are best explored through discussion and that requires ensuring sufficient time.

A 'gender neutral' approach – Every young person should feel this work has relevance to them. It is important to reinforce the fact that abuse can happen in any relationship and that both young men and young women may experience abuse from their partners.

LGBT young people may be at additional risk especially if they have yet to share their sexual orientation with people other than their immediate partner. For this reason, it is helpful to use terms that are gender neutral for example '*their partner*' rather than '*their boyfriend*' or '*their girlfriend*'. It is important to focus on behaviour - what is said and done and the immediate, short and long term consequences rather than identity - who the individuals may be.

Creating a safe learning climate – the young people should be involved in negotiating and agreeing ground rules or a working agreement for any sessions on relationships. Young people should be discouraged from making personal disclosures or those that may relate to other people in front of their peers. It is also important to clarify boundaries around confidentiality and safeguarding especially what you as a teacher can and cannot keep confidential. See also **Considerations for this age group** above.

Openness – It is important to facilitate and enable an open discussion about abuse. This may mean managing opinions or views that may be challenging, inappropriate or unacceptable. Rather than simply blocking them, provided comments do not breach the agreed ground rules (for example referring directly to another individual in the group), it can be better to explore them by inviting others in the class or group to respond. It can be useful to explore what the immediate, short and long term consequences of such views or opinions may be, who might be affected if they are enacted and if there might be legal consequences.

A non-judgemental approach - Strategies for managing or terminating an abusive relationship may seem easy or obvious to the person being abused's friends or family, yet it may be extremely difficult for the individual to act. Abuse is never 'justified' and it is essential to challenge any suggestion of 'victim blaming' either for the abuse or for feeling unable or unwilling to leave an abusive relationship.

'Distancing the learning' – Because of the sensitivity of this issue it is important not to ask young people to explore issues in the 'first person' ('*Imagine this was happening to you*'). Instead it is safer to distance learning by moving any stimulus for discussion to a 'third person' position ('*Imagine someone told you...and asked you for help*'). Not only is this emotionally safer it also offers greater opportunity to explore strategies for helping others.

Safeguarding - it is essential to ensure pastoral support is available for any young person who may be vulnerable and adults regardless of role should follow their school, college or other setting's safeguarding and child protection policies and protocols for any young person thought to be at risk. The difficulty of recognising and acknowledging that a relationship is abusive and feeling able to share this with someone else should not be underestimated. It may take young people some time to process this learning and they may request support either for themselves or for others some time after undertaking this work.

For further detailed guidance on preparing to address abuse in relationships with young people see the Disrespect NoBody discussion guide.

Integrating this learning into your PSHE education programme

A planned, developmental programme of learning for PSHE education offers the best framework for exploring the knowledge, skills and attributes related to healthy relationships. This guidance provides links to the relevant learning opportunities from the PSHE education programme of study for the 16 - 18 age group (key stage 5), which teachers/facilitators can use as a basis for their planning.

Links to the PSHE Association programme of study

The PSHE education programme of study is expressed through three core themes: 'Health and wellbeing', 'Relationships' and 'Living in the wider world'. Each of the core themes contains suggested learning opportunities for each key stage. These learning opportunities provide the context through which young people can develop knowledge, essential skills and attributes for developing and maintaining healthy relationships. The learning opportunities should be used flexibly according to the young people's development, readiness and needs, and taking account of prior learning, experience and understanding.

The table below shows the learning opportunities from each of the three PSHE education core themes at KS5, which are most relevant to learning about healthy and unhealthy relationships, consent and seeking help.

Note: The learning opportunities identified are for guidance only: teachers/ facilitators are not expected to cover all learning opportunities. Covering fewer but in-depth, is often more valuable than covering more but superficially.

Learning opportunities for teaching about healthy and unhealthy relationships within the PSHE education programme of study: key stage 5	
Core theme	**Learning opportunity**
Health and wellbeing (H)	**H17**. manage online safety in all its forms; protecting their privacy; protecting their 'on line presence' and building and maintaining a positive personal reputation
	H19. manage personal safety off-line, including when socialising (including meeting someone in person for the first time whom they met online)
Relationships (R)	**R1**. develop and maintain healthy relationships; differentiate between 'love' and 'lust'; understand what it means to be 'in love'
	R3. recognise and manage negative influence, manipulation and persuasion in a variety of contexts;
	R4. manage the ending of relationships safely and respectfully
	R5. recognise, manage and escape from different forms of physical and emotional abuse; how and where to get support; how to support others they care about to manage and escape from abuse
	R6. understand and value the concept and qualities of consent in relationships
	R7. understand the moral and legal responsibility borne by the seeker of consent, and the importance of respecting and protecting people's right to give, not give, or withdraw their consent
	R8. understand and appreciate the legal consequences of failing to respect others' right to not give or to withdraw consent
	R9. seek redress if their consent has not been respected; how to recognise and seek help in the case of sexual exploitation, assault or rape
	R10. appreciate the ways different cultures and faiths view relationships, respecting others' right to hold their own views
	R11. recognise and use language and strategies in order to manage pressure in a variety of forms and contexts
	R12. manage issues of harassment (including on-line) and stalking; understand their rights and access support

Living in the wider world (L)	**L4**. be a 'critical consumer' of on-line information in all its forms; appreciate how social media can expand, limit or distort their view of the world; recognise the importance of critical questioning of information presented through all forms of media; understand how social media can be used to distribute propaganda, coerce and manipulate; understand why they should think critically before forwarding or sharing stories or images received via social media
	L5. set and maintain clear boundaries around their personal privacy; protect their personal reputation especially on-line; be a 'responsible provider' of online data about themselves or about others (including understanding how cameras and microphones in computers and mobile phones can be activated without their knowledge)
	L7. exercise their legal rights and responsibilities; know who can support them if they have a grievance
	L8. recognise and challenge prejudice and discrimination; understand their rights in relation to inclusion

Discussion activity ideas

The discussion activities below have been designed to be used flexibly with young people aged 16 - 18. Each offers suggestions for structuring group work and facilitating a subsequent discussion.

Some learning provides new understanding, strategies and skills however some 're-energises' prior learning, revisiting it and helping young people see its relevance by connecting it to their current lives. Although the PSHE education programme may have covered work on abuse in previous years, it should now be revisited and explored through contexts that have relevance for young people in key stage 5. It is appropriate to revisit some topics from early years as young people are likely to have had new personal experiences and gained a greater maturity perhaps giving these issues a new relevance.

Starting each session from where the young people are

A baseline assessment activity is given below that should be carried out before the first session but at the beginning of any subsequent session using these discussion activities, it is important to gauge again the young people's current understanding, skills, beliefs and attitudes concerning abuse in relationships. This will allow you to 'pitch' the session at the right level, starting from where they are. This can be done in a number of ways, including through questioning, brainstorming or mind-mapping, standing along a continuum to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with statements you give them, imagining they are explaining the concept to someone who has no understanding of it whatsoever, writing everything they know/believe/feel/want to know about the topic on a 'graffiti wall' and so on.

Ending each session by reflecting on their learning

At the end of each session, revisiting this baseline assessment starter activity allows the young people and you to reflect on their learning and the extent to which their understanding, skills, beliefs and attitudes have changed as a result of the session. For example, they could add to or amend their brainstorm/mind-map/graffiti wall in a different colour pen, repeat the continuum activity to see whether they would now stand anywhere else, or simply discuss what they have learned/feel differently about/want to know more about as a result of the session. It is also important to allow time at the end for them to reflect privately on their learning

It is essential to have read this guidance document in full before using these activities. The Disrespect NoBody resource for those working with the 13 – 16 age group also contains guidance and session plans that may be useful, either as background reading for those working with young people added 16 – 18, or to be adapted and integrated with the activity ideas below, if the young people have not previously experienced the 13 – 16 age group sessions.

Baseline Activity – Starting from where the young people are

It is important to understand how the young people are already interpreting concepts such as 'a healthy relationship', what they have a right to expect from the behaviour of their partner, their responsibilities towards their partner, what we understand by the term 'abuse', their responsibilities towards someone they believe may be experiencing abuse.

Working in pairs or groups of four, ask the young people to discuss the following:

- What would you expect to see in a 'healthy relationship'?
- How would people behave towards one another in 'healthy relationship'?
- What does the term 'abuse in a relationship' mean to you?
- What sort of behaviours would you consider 'abusive?'

Invite them to feedback their discussions.

- What do the groups have in common?
- What have some groups identified that others haven't?
- Do other groups agree with these? Why? Why not?

Activity 1 - Respect in relationships and sexual encounters

Learning objective

To deepen understanding of the role of respect in relationships and how this understanding can support positive sexual encounters and attitudes that support and encourage abuse.

Intended learning outcomes

By the end of this activity the young people will be able to say:

- I understand how a lack of mutual and self-respect will negatively impact on relationships and sexual encounters

- I can identify the features of a positive sexual encounter

- I can identify attitudes that support or encourage abuse in relationships or sexual encounters

Having agreed ground rules and explained protocols for accessing help and support if they are concerned in any way about themselves or others as a result of the session, and having carried out the baseline activity above, show the young people the Disrespect Nobody film. Ask the group to discuss the following questions in pairs:

- What are the key messages in the film? Are they put across effectively? Why? Why not? What is the purpose of the 'body part puppets'?

- Who is it aimed at?

- Why do you think the film portrays only heterosexual relationships?

- Are the issues around abusive relationships any different in non-heterosexual relationships?

- What do you think about the line '*There's a person attached to every body. Respect both*'? In what ways do people in healthy relationships show respect to the other person? In what ways do they show respect for the other person's body? In what ways do they respect their own bodies?

Take feedback, ensuring the following points are covered:

- The film focuses on the male characters as the abuser and the female characters as the victim because evidence consistently shows that most abuse in relationships is perpetrated by men against women. However, it is vital that the young people recognise that boys and men can be victims of abuse and abuse can happen within any relationship. This includes heterosexual relationships where the female is the abuser and the male is the victim, as well as within lesbian, gay and bisexual relationships, while we know that trans people are also disproportionately vulnerable to abuse.

- If someone objectifies another person, seeing them as no more than a collection of body parts, then they dehumanise that person, not taking into account their feelings, wants, and needs, or their rights, including their right to give or not give their consent to any sexual activity.

Harmful messages that support or encourage abuse and undermine respect.[1]

Either show the following statements on the board or make sets of cards with a statement on each (enough for one set per small group of about four young people). Explain that these are harmful messages young people their age might be exposed to in a number of ways (which will be considered later), which can undermine respect and encourage abuse in relationships and sexual encounters.

In small groups, ask the young people to discuss which of these harmful messages they 'recognise', putting the messages (or writing the message numbers) into a diamond where position 1 at the top is the most influential on young people their age and their relationships and position 5 at the bottom is the least (see diagram):

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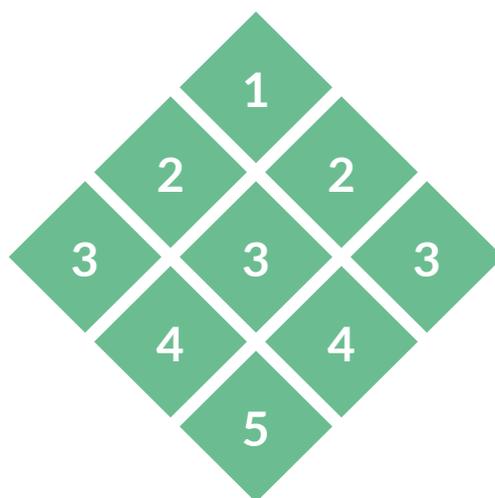
[1] This activity was adapted from CEOP's advice for parents: https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents/articles/Challenging-harmful-sexual-attitudes/

Harmful messages (adapted from CEOP's Thinkuknow website)

1. In sexual situations, normal values about how other people should be treated and respected don't apply – in fact they can get in the way of 'good sex'

2. Male sexual arousal should be acted on, this is 'sexual freedom' – and anyway it's too strong a feeling to resist

3. Sexual activity is mostly about satisfying male sexual desire

4. Sexiness is primarily about how someone looks (most importantly the woman or girl), rather than their character or the personal connection between sexual partners

5. Sex is enhanced by breaking boundaries, for example, by persuading someone who is initially reluctant, or by using aggression

6. Men and boys should be admired for their sexual activities

7. Women and girls should be negatively judged for their sexual activities

8. Sex is like a 'battlefield': boys should try to get as much sex as they can and girls should resist – so when it does happen, it's a conquest for the boy (but often a source of shame for the girl)

9. People should be negatively judged for being gay or bisexual

Take quick feedback. Were there any they didn't recognise? Which are the most/ least influential? Do all groups agree?

There is no right or wrong answer and the order the young people place the messages in is less important than the conversation that results from deciding together on their 'diamond', through which the messages will be recognised and explored.

Now ask the groups to brainstorm where young people receive these messages from. Take feedback, drawing out that they are frequently reinforced via pornography, music lyrics and videos, video games. Explain that these ideas can take hold in young people's peer groups, defining what is cool and respected, so that even if a young person avoids sexist media, they can still be influenced by its myths. The messages are reinforced through shared jokes and put-downs, as well as admiring and copying those behaviours that fit with them, and ignoring and ridiculing those that don't.

Stress that these ideas let both boys and girls down. They make it harder for everyone to have personal and equal relationships, as well as mutually enthusiastic, respectful and satisfying sexual activity.

The features of positive sexual encounters

Having explored harmful messages that could undermine respect and healthy, positive relationships and sexual encounters, remind the young people about the features of a healthy relationship they identified in the baseline activity. In that activity they considered more established relationships. Ask them now to brainstorm, in groups of four, the features of a positive, equal, respectful sexual encounter (which could be anything from kissing, to sending sexual messages, to sexual intercourse) whether that is within a new or established relationship. This can be done through small group discussion, a mind-map, post-it notes on the board, writing on a 'graffiti wall' etc. (A reminder of the ground rules may be helpful in managing behaviour in responding to this activity!)

Take feedback, drawing out the following features (taken from CEOP's Thinkuknow website)

- **Shared enthusiasm** – people only do things they are both enthusiastic about, without any force, persuasion or trickery involved. There are mutual positive emotions and an absence of negative ones. It is always OK to withdraw at any stage from sexual activity, and signals to this effect are responded to and respected.

- **Equality** - Sexual activity takes place in equal relationships, in which people are equally able to agree to, say no to, and withdraw from the activity without fear of negative consequences.

- **Empathy** - Before, during and after, people think about, care about and respond to their own and the other person's feelings.

- **Communication** - People check in with one another about their feelings and preferences.

- **Knowledge** - They have a clear awareness of who the other person is. Both people understand their approach to the sexual encounter and any risks it might involve. There isn't any deception or withholding of relevant information.

Ask the small groups to consider each of these points and discuss any situations or factors would make it difficult to follow these principles.

Take feedback, drawing out that alcohol and drug use, having only just met someone, having more than two people involved, and/or the encounter taking place online, can all impact on the extent to which these principles can be adhered to. If possible, link this to any previous learning within the PSHE education programme about assessing and managing risk.

Link the three discussions – the features of a healthy relationship and a positive, equal, respectful sexual encounter identified above and in the baseline activity are absent from the relationships depicted in the film and are undermined by the harmful messages young people are exposed to. Having a clear understanding

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² This activity was adapted from CEOP's advice for parents, which can be found here: https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents/
   articles/Supporting-positive-sexual-behaviour/

of the features they would want in their relationships and should expect in any sexual encounter will support young people to recognise warning signs in their own relationships, be alert to sexual activities, or behaviours that could harm themselves or others, develop positive sexual self-esteem and build relationships that are positive and safe for themselves and the other person.[2]

Checklist for a positive relationship

Still in their groups of four, ask the young people to agree a short list of questions that young people their age could use to help them identify what they are looking for in a relationship and whether their relationship is healthy, equal and positive. Examples might include:

- What do I really want from a relationship?
- Are my expectations of my partner influenced by things I've seen or heard in the media/pornography?
- Do I feel respected in this relationship?
- Am I feeling any pressure or am I putting my partner under pressure to behave in a certain way/do a particular thing?

Ending the session:

See 'Ending each session by reflecting on their learning' above, for ideas on how to gauge learning and progress. Build in time for the young people to also reflect privately on their learning.

Signpost sources of support in your setting, locally and nationally – see *Resource D: Further sources of help for young people* in the Disrespect NoBody discussion guide.

Further discussion activities that can be used to explore further, especially with young people who have not previously used the Disrespect NoBody resources

Activity 2 - Exploring trust in relationships and sexual encounters

Learning objective

To deepen understanding of the concept and role of trust in relationships and sexual encounters

Intended learning outcomes

By the end of this activity the young people will be able to say:

- I understand the role of trust in a relationship and what can affect someone's trust in a partner
- I understand that having strong feelings of attraction towards a new partner does not mean I should automatically trust them completely

Introduction

This first activity considers the issue of 'trust'. Early relationships can generate powerful feelings of attraction and excitement. It is important to explore how having these feelings towards someone need not mean we should automatically give them our complete trust. Trust is not something we either give or withhold. It is important to explore the complexities of trust and that there are 'degrees of trust'.

Trusting another person will always entail a degree of risk. We may be let down or disappointed however trust is something we offer to another person and we should think carefully before making this offer. Once given our trust can also be taken back, either by degrees or totally, our trust always belongs to us.

Ask the whole group –

- How easy is it to trust someone in the very early stages of a new relationship?
- When someone first starts 'seeing' someone else, is it realistic to expect the new partner to 'trust them completely' – is 'having complete trust in each other' realistic at the start of a relationship or is it OK to gradually build trust in one another?

Ask the young people to work in groups of four.

Prepare sets of cards with the scenarios below – give a set to each group.

Ask the groups to consider how strongly someone would have to trust someone else to agree do these things with them.

Groups should rank them from '*I think they would need to feel a high degree of trust*' to '*I think they would be OK with a lower degree of trust*'.

- Meeting someone they have met online for the first time in a public place.

- Meeting someone they have met online for the first time in a private place.

- Going on a date with someone to a party being held by mutual friends.

- Going on a date with someone to somewhere they have chosen.

- Having a lift home in a car with someone.

- Being in an isolated place together.

- Going back to 'their place' after a date.

- Sharing an image of them doing something 'funny' or 'silly' with someone.

- Sharing an image of them doing something 'risky' – perhaps something that could get them into trouble with someone if they saw it.

- Sharing an intimate image of themselves with someone – an image they would only ever want the other person to see.[3]

- Agreeing to put an app like 'Find my Friends' on their phone so someone always knows where they are.

Ask groups to compare their lists.

- Are they similar?

- Are there any significant differences *between* groups? If so invite the groups to discuss this.

- Was there broad agreement *within* groups?

If groups say '*it all depends*' explore what it '*depends*' upon.

- Is trust dependent on how long they have known someone?

- Is trust dependant on how they have behaved towards them in the past?

- Is trust dependent on their 'reputation' with others?

- Is trust how they react when they see someone might be hesitant or uncomfortable about doing something – (does the person demonstrate that they respect their wishes?)

- Are any OK to do with someone they have just met or recently met?

Now that the whole class has discussed this, are there any scenarios in the groups' own ranking that they would now like to move? Why?

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[3] Remind young people sharing sexually explicit images of anyone under 18 is a serious criminal offence – even if it is an image of themselves – and can have serious and long lasting consequences

Ask groups how they feel about the statement
'*Attraction can be instant and intense – trust has to be earned*'

- How do people 'earn our trust'?

- Are strong feelings of attraction towards someone the same as being willing to trust them?

- Does it make any difference if a person feels *really* attracted to them?

- Do people ever feel if they refuse to do something it might damage a relationship – especially if it is in its early stages?

- Might people feel that it is more important to keep a relationship going than to always feel safe or comfortable? If someone said this to you what would you say?

Ending the session:

See 'Ending each session by reflecting on their learning' above, for ideas on how to gauge learning and progress. Build in time for the young people to also reflect privately on their learning.

Signpost sources of support in your setting, locally and nationally – see *Resource D: Further sources of help for young people* in the Disrespect NoBody discussion guide.

Activity 3 - Controlling abuse'

Learning objective

To understand that controlling behaviour can be abusive and to recognise and analyse possible signs of controlling abuse.

Intended learning outcomes

By the end of this activity the young people will be able to say:

- I know that abuse in relationships is not always physical and can be about power and control

- I can recognise warning signs of 'controlling abuse'

- I know some sources of support if I am worried about myself or someone else

Introduction

Abuse can be subtle and may be virtually invisible to those outside the relationship. One of the most insidious forms is 'controlling abuse' where one individual limits the choices or decisions of another. This control need not be exercised by actual, or threatened, physical violence but the subtle use of language or expression. However it is exercised, it remains abuse.

Ask the young people to work in groups of four. Either make sets of cards for each group with one of the scenarios below on each card, or display the scenarios on the board.

Ask the groups to consider the following scenarios and either place the cards, or write the numbers on a continuum with '*Definitely abuse*' at one end, '*Could be abuse – we need to know more*' in the middle and '*Definitely not abuse*' at the other.

Scenarios:

1. Two people are playing around together and laughing when one grabs the other's phone and says *'Let me see who you've been texting and who's been texting you!'*

2. A person says to their partner, *'You're not going out with me looking like that, are you?'*

3. Someone says to you, *'I can't come out tonight, I have to be in by 7.00 in case my partner comes round. They get really angry if I'm not in.'*

4. Someone says to you, *'He's asked me to put an 'app' on my phone so he always knows where I am – he says it's because he cares about me and so he knows I'm safe.'*

5. A person says to their partner, *'I don't like you hanging around with them or talking to them. I want you to stop seeing them.'*

6. Someone says to you, *'I don't like doing it but my partner says everyone does it and gets angry if I don't say I will.'*

Ask groups to compare their layouts.

- What did they decide 'definitely is abuse', 'could be abuse' or 'definitely is not abuse'?

It is likely that most will be close to the middle position – they *could* be abusive.

- Ask groups to discuss what additional information they would need to decide if these situations are 'definitely abuse' or 'definitely not abusive'.

Take feedback, then either in a whole group discussion or in small groups explore these questions:

- Is there a single point where something definitely becomes abuse – 'a line that is crossed'?

- Is there a difference between being 'thoughtless' and being 'abusive'?

- Why might people behave towards their partner in this way? Why might they want to control parts of their lives?   - Draw out if this is caring for someone or exercising power over someone. Whose interests are being served?

- Is this acceptable?

- What could someone say or do who experiences this type of control? Draw out that there are a number of sources of support for anyone who thinks they, or someone they know, may be in an abusive relationship (see below). If they are at all worried about themselves, or someone else they should always seek help. They will always be taken seriously and it is never their fault. This is further developed in activity 3.

Ending the session:

See 'Ending each session by reflecting on their learning' above, for ideas on how to gauge learning and progress. Build in time for the young people to also reflect privately on their learning.

Signpost sources of support in your setting, locally and nationally – see Resource D: Further sources of help for young people in the Disrespect NoBody discussion guide.

Activity 4 - When does 'minding our own business' change to 'time to do something'?

Learning objective

To understand and manage the potential conflict someone may experience when they suspect or know that a friend is in an abusive relationship.

Intended learning outcome

By the end of this activity the young people will be able to say:

- I can identify when and how someone should intervene when they fear or know that someone else is in an abusive relationship

Introduction

People experiencing abuse may find themselves caught up in emotional conflict especially if it is taking place in an established relationship. It is possible that their friends may identify something is wrong or they may confide in their friends, seeking advice or simply unburdening.

It is possible that the friends of the person experiencing abuse may be in a much stronger position emotionally to act on their friend's behalf. However, they may be faced with a dilemma. A person experiencing abuse may want to share their experiences but be afraid of their friends intervening. This can lead to demands for confidentiality placing friends in a dilemma: to act and break the confidence, or respect their friend's requests, do nothing and watch their friend continue to suffer.

Ask the young people to work in groups of four.

Ask groups to imagine this scenario

A friend asks you for your advice. They have a friend Sam who has been in a relationship for six months and it has been really good. Sam cares deeply for their partner who up to now has always been thoughtful, gentle and kind.

Recently however their partner has been demanding they do things that make Sam feel really uncomfortable. If Sam doesn't want to do these things their partner gets angry and says Sam is not 'normal'. They have threatened to tell Sam's friends that Sam is 'weird' if Sam doesn't agree. Sam's partner is still caring and kind most of time but Sam is frightened that next time they lose their temper because Sam doesn't want to do something they might react more violently.

Sam has begged your friend not to tell anyone and to promise not to say or do anything. Your friend's own partner has said everyone should mind their own business and that your friend can't break the promise to Sam.

Your friend wants to know your opinion. What should they do?

Ask groups to feed back their discussions.

Questions to explore during feedback:

- Should Sam be experiencing this type of behaviour?

- Is Sam being abused?

- Does it matter exactly what Sam is refusing to do? Is it enough that it makes Sam feel uncomfortable?

- Why might Sam not want anyone to 'say or do anything'?

- How do groups feel about the statement 'everyone should mind their own business?' When does something become 'our business'?

- Should a promise not to do anything be kept? Is there a point where you feel it must be broken?

- What might happen if someone intervenes?

- What might happen if no one intervenes? Is it likely that Sam's partner will suddenly improve their behaviour?

- Now your friend knows this is happening, do they have any responsibility to act?

- If your friend decides to act what could they say or do? Whom could they talk to or tell?

In their groups of four, ask the young people to script the opening sentences that someone who is worried that their friend may be in an abusive relationship might use in the following situations:

- Broaching their concerns with the friend, in the hope that their friend will seek help

- Broaching their concerns for their friend with a trusted person in school/college, the family, local support service, or national helpline

Take feedback agreeing as a whole group which of the suggestions might be the best way to start such conversations.

Ask the group if they think the friend should speak to the abusive partner about their concerns. Why? Why not? (Draw out that it's important that the person considers their own and their friend's safety first and foremost, so it is better to seek help than attempt to 'tackle' the situation themselves).

Ending the session:

See 'Ending each session by reflecting on their learning' above, for ideas on how to gauge learning and progress. Build in time for the young people to also reflect privately on their learning.

Signpost sources of support in your setting, locally and nationally – see *Resource D: Further sources of help for young people* in the Disrespect NoBody discussion guide.

Activity 5 - Conflicting feelings

Learning objective

To deepen understanding of issues surrounding the sharing of sexual images

Learning outcome

By the end of this activity the young people will be able to say:

- I understand the implications and consequences of sharing sexual images with a partner, or pressurising a partner to share images with me

Introduction

This discussion activity focuses specifically on the issue of being pressured to provide an intimate image to a partner. This is more complex than simply focusing on the potential risks and legalities although these are important. There are issues of appropriateness, is it fair to put someone you care about in this position, especially if you suspect they may be uncomfortable with doing this? There are issues of trust and the anxiety of how refusal may be taken by the requesting party.

Many early relationships will break up and people will move on to new relationships but at the time in a relationship it may be difficult to consider the consequences of such a break up. If we have provided intimate images we need to be able to trust our partner while we are in the relationship and should it break up long afterwards.

Ask the young people to work in groups of four.

Ask groups to imagine this scenario

Imagine a friend of yours has been in a relationship for a while now. Their partner has asked them to swap intimate images of themselves so they can both have them on their phones. They are not sure what to do. Part of them feels that this would be good, they care deeply for their partner and like the idea but another part of them is uneasy about agreeing to do this.

Imagine they ask you for your advice – what would you say? Why would you say that?

Ask groups to feed back their discussions.

Questions to explore during feedback:

- Should anyone be asked to do something that makes them uneasy? Is this fair?
- What might be the risks of providing such an image? Now, In the future?
- Can we have conflicting feelings pushing us in different directions – (perhaps our 'heart' may say one thing, our 'head' may be saying something else)?
- What might help resolve this? Is this something that needs talking about?

Your friend decided to refuse to share images. Their partner got angry and accused them of not trusting them and said that if they can't completely trust one another they need to think about ending their relationship. Your friend is deeply upset and is blaming themselves saying they were just being stupid in refusing. They desperately want the relationship to continue and now think they should agree to share image to show their trust.

They ask you for your advice – what would you say?

Ask groups to feed back their discussions.

Questions to explore during feedback:

- Is anyone being unfair?
- Should your friend be blaming themselves? For what?
- Is it realistic to demand someone 'completely trusts you' after several months?
- Is it fair to put someone under pressure in this way?
- Is this abuse? If so why? If not, why not?
- Should your friend now agree to share images? Should they need to 'prove their trust' by doing this? Will 'giving in' strengthen or damage this relationship?
- In a relationship, we inevitably make ourselves vulnerable to our partner hence the need for trust – is there a difference between doing this willingly and being pressured into doing this?

The pressure has continued and your friend decides to end the relationship.

- Do you think this will be an easy breakup?

- What might happen next?

- Do you think the feelings of uncertainty over what might happen after a breakup, especially the fear of being on your own, might keep people in an unhealthy relationship?

- What if your friend had decided to give their partner an intimate image of themselves then decides to break up? Might this leave them vulnerable? (Reinforce legislation re 'revenge porn')

Ending the session:

See 'Ending each session by reflecting on their learning' above, for ideas on how to gauge learning and progress. Build in time for the young people to also reflect privately on their learning.

Signpost sources of support in your setting, locally and nationally – see *Resource D: Further sources of help for young people* in the Disrespect NoBody discussion guide.

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[4] See - https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/405286/revenge-porn-factsheet.pdf