Pressure

and PSHE Education

2023

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Introduction

This pack aims to support education providers to deliver quality PSHE education around pressure through identifying the curriculum links within the PSHE Associations' Spiral Curriculum and the Department for Education's statutory guidance and developing staff's confidence and competence on the subject matter to support them to facilitate PSHE education on this topic within their own setting.

The Department for Education's statutory guidance states that:
- Pupils can also put knowledge into practice as they develop the capacity to make sound decisions when facing risks, challenges and complex contexts.
- Schools should show flexibility to respond to local public health and community issues to meet the needs of pupils
- Should be addressed sensitively and clearly

Children and young people need to be taught to manage risks, make safer choices and recognise when pressure from others threatens their personal safety and wellbeing.

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Safe Learning Environment

A safe learning environment enables children and young people to feel comfortable to share their ideas without attracting negative feedback. It avoids possible distress and prevents disclosures in a public setting and enables professionals to manage conversations on sensitive issues confidently.

We have created a guidance document to support professionals to create this safe in their own setting.

No. 01 — Ground Rules

Create in collaboration with the group . As the facilitator role model the agreed ground rules.

No. 02 — Collaborate with DSL

Let them know when the session is being delivered to ensure the correct support is in place should any disclosures be made.

No. 03 — Staff Confidence

Check Staff confidence levels. If anyone is in panic zone it is not safe or appropriate for them or the participants to teach on the topic. This pack should help professionals to move from panic zone to learning or comfort zone

No. 04   Learning Techniques

Use scenarios and stories to help participants engage with the topic. Refer to the third person rather than you e.g. what could this character do?, or people of about your age....

No. 05 — Difficult Questions

Questions are an important part of learning. Sometimes a child or young person will ask a difficult question. As with all questions the first thing is to value the question whilst either allowing time to consider an appropriate answer or to deflect an inappropriate question.
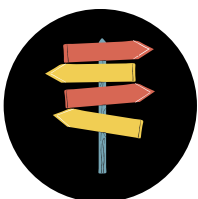
No. 06 — Signposting

It is absolutely essential, that included in the lesson, is information about different organisations and people that can provide support both within the organisation and outside of it.

A more detailed version of this page is available by emailing either Natalie or Ellie

Best Practice Principles

Do not use scare/fear or guilt tactics

It is a common misconception that if a child or young person is shocked or scared by what they see in images, videos used in sessions, they will avoid the behaviour in the future.

Whilst young people will often say that they like 'hard-hitting' material and that it engages them more effectively, in fact when experienced in a safe setting (in this case a classroom or youth space), shocking images become exciting (in a similar way to watching a horror film or riding a rollercoaster) and this excitement response can block the desired learning. Equally, for anyone who has previously been affected by something similar, it can re-traumatise them or they can block the message as it is too close for comfort, which again prevents the intended learning. It also presents a scenario which is more likely to make young people think 'that won't ever happen to me' than the desired 'that could be me' response.

The adolescent brain is still developing which means that the perception of messaging and how they react to them is different to our experiences as adults. Furthermore, because their brains are still developing, they often live "in the moment;" when an unhealthy situation arises, they'll make decisions based on what they're feeling then and there, instead of making a reasoned, logical decision.
The pre-frontal cortex or critical thinking/reasoning part of the brain is the last section to develop.

You can find out more about the teenage brain here.

Young people should be informed of risks in a balance and measured way through an approach that supports them to make informed, healthy, safe decisions and empower them to believe they can act on "good choices.

Top Tips:

- Evidence shows that shock and scare tactics just don't work.
- Check resources (including external agencies) for images or scenes that might be shocking, harrowing or scary for the age group – remember that children and young people will have a much lower threshold for what might worry them.
- Remember the purpose of the session is to educate not entertain. Just because young people might watch scary films in their own time, does not mean using similar films within PSHE Education will promote learning.
- Make sure there is a range of examples, case studies and consequences, most of which do not focus on the most dramatic or extreme outcomes.

Best Practice Principles

Knowledge, Skills and Values

Topics explored in PSHE education, relate directly to a child's or young person's life, when they might find themselves in a tricky situation or "crunch" moment – and need to make a quick decision; for example, a child who is dared to run across the road by their friends, or a teenager who is being pressured to start a fire. They will need to recall learning from PSHE education at that moment to help them make a decision.

They will, of course, require knowledge e.g., of the legality (or not) of their actions. However, in order to make a safe decision in the moment, they will also need skills to negotiate with their peers to resist pressure from others, to exit the situation (if they choose to) and access appropriate help or support if necessary. They will need a strong sense of their own values, to make the right decision and the confidence to stick to it.

Knowledge on its own won't necessarily stop someone from trying things. In many cases young people end up in situations where they know what they are doing is "wrong", but they do it anyway, as they lack the essential skills or attributes to help them effectively manage the situation.

To ensure that sessions are balanced it is important to know the purpose of the activity and create a balanced session that increases or enables reflection on knowledge, skills and values.

The definition of each of these is:

Knowledge: gaining new information on a topic
Skills: gaining new skills on a topic
Values: reflecting on, and potentially altering, your own values in relation to a topic

Skills

Values

Knowledge
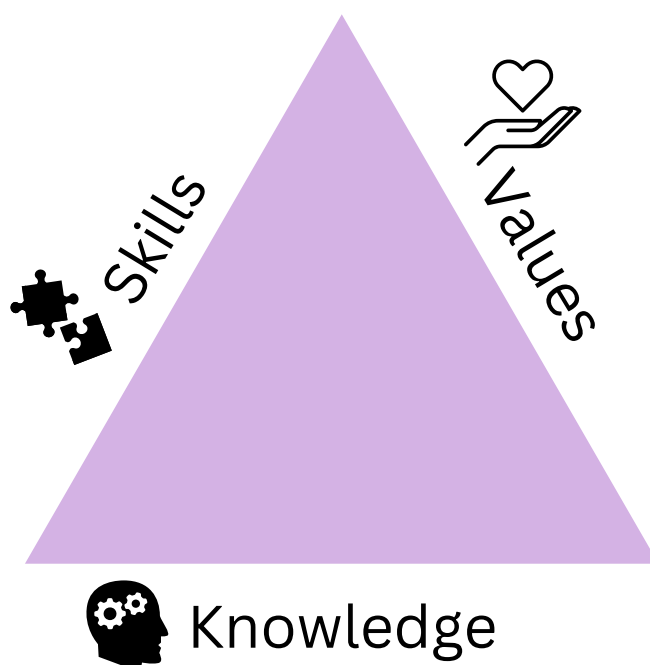
Tips for Communication

Communication difficulties

Special provision should be put in place to support conversations with children, young people or adult learners who:

- have communication difficulties
- are too young
- are unable to communicate
- cannot or will not explain

You should refer to the child, young person or adult learner's behaviour plan and the information available from any assessments. This may include visual cues to help facilitate discussion, such as picture exchange communication cards.

Mencap has published further information on communicating with people with learning difficulties.

The National Autistic Society has also published tips to communicate more effectively with an autistic person.

Links to PSHE Curriculum

The table below shows the learning opportunities from the relevant PSHE Association core themes which can be linked to Pressure.

Primary
PSHE Association
Key Stage 1

R19.	Basic techniques for resisting pressure to do something they don't want to do and which may make them unsafe
R20.	What to do if they feel unsafe or worried for themselves or others; who to ask for help and vocabulary to use when asking for help; importance of keeping trying until they are heard

Key Stage 2

R15.	Strategies for recognising and managing peer influence and a desire for peer approval in friendships; to recognise the effect of online actions on others
R28.	How to recognise pressure from others to do something unsafe or that makes them feel uncomfortable and strategies for managing this
R29.	Where to get advice and report concerns if worried about their own or someone else's personal safety (including online)

PSHE Association:

SSS3 - Trust

Enrichment	Explain that if we don't feel sure about sharing information or feel pressured, we don't have to
Enrichment	Give examples of how others may put us under pressure to do something
Enrichment	Explain what a 'dare' is and what people might say or do if they are 'daring' us
Enrichment	Identify some basic strategies for saying 'no' to pressure or dares
Enrichment	Identify whom to tell in different situations and what we could say
Enhancement	Describe how we might feel if someone has dared us to do something
Enhancement	Explain or demonstrate strategies to resist pressure to behave in inappropriate ways
Enhancement	Demonstrate what we can say and do and where to get help if we have been pressurised, or seen someone else being pressurised, to do something risky

DfE Statutory Guidance:

By the end of Primary pupils will know:

BS1.	What sorts of boundaries are appropriate in friendships with peers and others (including in a digital context)
BS5.	How to recognise and report feelings of being unsafe or feeling bad about any adult.

Secondary
PSHE Association
Key Stage 3

H5.	to recognise and manage internal and external influences on decisions which affect health and wellbeing
H25.	Strategies to manage a range of influences on drug, alcohol and tobacco use, including peers
H32.	The risks associated with gambling and recognise that chance-based transactions can carry similar risks; strategies for managing peer and other influences relating to gambling
R24.	That consent is freely given; that being pressurised, manipulated or coerced to agree to something is not giving consent, and how to seek help in such circumstances
R42.	To recognise peer influence and to develop strategies for managing it, including online
R43.	The role peers can play in supporting one another to resist pressure and influence, challenge harmful social norms and access appropriate support
R44.	That the need for peer approval can generate feelings of pressure and lead to increased risk-taking; strategies to manage this
R46.	Strategies to manage pressure to join a gang, exit strategies and how to access appropriate support
R47.	motivations, misconceptions and consequences of carrying weapons and strategies for managing pressure to carry a weapon
L18.	To evaluate social and moral dilemmas about the use of money, including the influence of advertising and peers on financial decisions

Key Stage 4

H4.	Strategies to develop assertiveness and build resilience to peer and other influences that affect both how they think about themselves and their health and wellbeing
R35.	To evaluate ways in which their behaviours may influence their peers, positively and negatively, including online, and in situations involving weapons or gangs
R36.	Skills to support younger peers when in positions of influence
R37.	To recognise situations where they are being adversely influenced, or are at risk, due to being part of a particular group or gang; strategies to access appropriate help
L18.	To recognise and manage the range of influences on their financial decisions
L26.	how data may be used with the aim of influencing decisions, including targeted advertising and other forms of personalisation online; strategies to manage this

Key Stage 5

H2.	To recognise how idealised images of bodies and pressure to conform, can adversely affect body image and self-esteem; strategies to manage this pressure
R19.	To recognise and manage negative influence, manipulation and persuasion in a variety of contexts, including online

SEND

PSHE Association:

SA4- Managing Pressure

Core	Recognise what is meant by peer pressure and peer influence
Development	Identify some of the ways in which pressure might be put on us by other people, including online
Development	Describe ways we might challenge peer pressure
Enrichment	Describe strategies that can be used if someone is using pressure to persuade us to do something, including online
Enhancement	Describe how we can sometimes put ourselves under pressure to do what others are doing, or what we think others want us to do
Enhancement	Identify reasons why we might put ourselves under pressure, and how others may apply pressure or encourage us to join a group or a gang; exit strategies and how to access appropriate support

SSS7- Gambling

Enrichment	Describe some influences or pressures on people to gamble (e.g. advertising, friends)
Enhancement	Explain some strategies for managing influences related to gambling

CG4 - Intimate Relationships, Consent & Contraception

Enrichment	Describe ways to manage others' expectations in relationships and our right not to be pressurised to do anything we do not want to do
Enhancement	Identify how saying 'yes' under pressure is not consent, and is not the same as freely given, enthusiastic consent

HL1 - Elements of a Healthy Lifestyle

Enhancement	Describe strategies for managing pressures and influences on healthy lifestyle choices

HL7 - Medicinal Drugs, Drugs, Alcohol and Tobacco

Enrichment	Describe how pressure to use substances can come from a variety of sources, including people we know
Enrichment	Explain why we might put ourselves under pressure to try substances such as smoking and drinking (e.g. to fit in or not to feel left out)
Enrichment	Describe or demonstrate strategies to resist pressure to smoke, drink alcohol or use illegal drugs

WILI2 - Managing Online Information

Development	Identify some of the techniques that advertisers might use to get our attention or persuade us to believe something is true, and what their motives might be
Enhancement	Explain the influence that fake news can have on people's opinions, attitudes to others and understanding of the world.

DfE Statutory Guidance:

By the end of Secondary pupils will know:

I6.	That there are a range of strategies for identifying and managing sexual pressure, including understanding peer pressure, resisting pressure and not pressurising others.

NYA Youth Work Curriculum:

LP2.	Providing opportunities for young people for participate in democratic decision making within youth projects, and engage in campaign groups or youth councils

Useful Resources

Please check all resources are suitable for your settings and children before use

Pressure

Books:

5-8 years - <u>A Bad Case of Stripes</u>

10-14 years - <u>How to Say No</u>

Videos:

Amaze.org - <u>How to Handle Peer Pressure</u>

BBC Teach - <u>Dealing with Pressures to have Sex</u>

Beyond Equality - <u>Amour</u>

Lesson Plans:

KS2 (7-11 years) Media Literacy - <u>The Guardian Foundation</u> - Resources to support a whole school approach (Primary, Secondary, SEND) around understanding fake news and bias.

KS2-3 (9-15 years) - Peer Pressure - Advocates for Youth - <u>Managing Peer Pressure</u>

KS3 (12-13 years) - Peer Pressure - Bristol City Council - <u>Managing Peer Pressure</u>

KS3 (11-14 years) - Peer Pressure - Childnet - <u>Crossing the Line: Back Me Up</u>

KS3 (11-14 years - Body Image - <u>Confident Me</u>

<u>KS3/4 (11-16 years)</u> - Body Image - Childnet - Myths v Reality

KS3/4 (11-16 years) - Alcohol - Public Health England - <u>Alcohol it's your choice</u>

DEVELOPING SUBJECT KNOWLEDGE

PRESSURE

Staffordshire County Council

Why is this important?

Peers matter at all ages, but within adolescence peers takes on an increased importance and plays a role in decision making and risk taking and other things that children and young people may do.

Studies have shown, including epidemiological and car-insurance data (where they look at how having peers affects a young drivers changes of being involved in a incident) that teenagers are more susceptible to peer pressure. SCVYS's recent report into Young People's Perception of Violence found that young people in Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire cited peer pressure/negative friendship groups was one of the main causes of serious violence locally.

When young people are on their own and not with friends, they do not necessarily take more risks than adults do. There is something about the social context that increases risk taking. This means that young people are not necessarily increased risk takers, in fact they may even be risk averse when it comes to taking social risks - that is, where there is a risk of social exclusion. They avoid taking social risks, sometimes this means they end up taking healthy or legal risks.

It is important to explore peer influence and support children and young people to develop the self-confidence to resist in situation that carry health or legal risks.

Types of Pressure

The curriculum learning outcomes states there are different types of pressures children and young people face.

- Peer Pressure
- Advertising Pressure
- Internal Pressure

It is important that children and young people are able to create solutions and responses to situations where pressure may exist. Pressure and influence should be taken into consideration when delivering PSHE, particular when delivering the following topics:
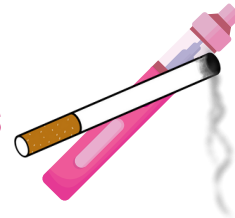
Friendships

Online Safety

Managing Risks

Gambling

Alcohol

Substances

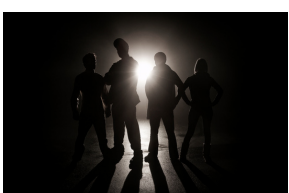**Smoking & Vaping**

Sex

Consent

Body Image

The Media

Gangs & Exploitation

Knife Crime

Brain Development

As humans we are motivated by belonging and connection with peers, which has evolved from a desire to keep ourselves safe (there was safety in numbers if you think back to the hunter gatherer era). A need to belong and be accepted by peers is a driver of human behaviour, and these desires often emerge strongly during adolescence as the social area of the brain develops, accompanied by an increase in independence/ less reliance on parents/carers. This often leads to an increase in susceptibility to peer influence and pressure (both positive and negative!)

Adolescence is an important time for brain development. Changes in the areas of the brain responsible for social processes can lead young people to focus more on peer relationships and social experiences. The emphasis on friendships, along with ongoing prefrontal cortex development, may lead young people to take more risks because the social rewards outweigh the possible consequences of a decision. It is important to remember that risks can be both positive - joining a new club or trying something new or could be negative or dangerous e.g. trespassing on the railway, shoplifting for a dare.

This video explains how the brain develops during adolescence and how this can impact on teaching.

Research evidences that young people are more likely to commit crimes in peer groups, whereas adults more frequently offend alone. Peer pressure can be challenging for children and young people to deal with, and learning way to say "no" or avoid pressure-filled situations can become overwhelming. Resisting peer pressure is more than just saying 'no' but how the brain functions.

Children and young people with stronger connections in their frontal lobes , along with other areas of the brain, are better equipped to resist peer pressure. During adolescence, the frontal lobes of the brain develop rapidly, causing axioms to have a coating of fatty myelin, this then enables the frontal lobes to communicate more effectively with other parts of the brain. When this happens a young person develops the judgment and self-control skills required to resist peer pressure.

Peer Pressure

People influence day-to-day decisions, sometimes without the individual even realising it.

> **Peer pressure - the strong influence of a group, especially of children, on members of that group to behave as everyone else does**
>
> <u>Cambridge Dictionary</u>

Peer pressure comes in many forms and a child or young person's friends can have both a negative and positive influence. It is important when delivering PSHE education that sessions reflect this.

Positive Peer Pressure:

In many cases, peers are positive and supportive. For instance, a child could be influenced to read a new book that they now can't put down or a young person encouraged to join a youth group, which helped them to foster a strong sense of community outside of school.

A supportive peer group enables children and young people to build positive relationships, develop effective communication skills and learn to make more informed decisions.

Negative Peer Pressure:

This type of pressure encourages children and young people to engage in risky behaviours, encourages negative behaviours or urges children and young people to participate in dangerous situations. This could be trying vaping or skipping school.

Negative peer pressure can impact of an individual's self-esteem and lead to the development of risky behaviours and habits.

Factors Leading to Peer Pressure

Here are some of the common causes, understanding the factors can help to build resilience towards peer pressure:

Desire for approval and social acceptance

People want to feel accepted and included in their social groups. This often leads to individual conforming to group norms or behaviours patterns.

Fear of rejection

The desire to avoid rejection from a social group is a strong enough incentive for an individual to behave in ways they wouldn't usually choose.

Self-esteem issues

If a person has self-esteem issues then their trust in their own judgement is uncertain, this means people listen to the opinions of others more, despite if they disagre with the opinion shared.

Brain Development

Adolescence is a time when young people begin to seek their identity and independence and an increased importance on social rewards.

Group Dynamics

The characteristics of the group play an important role in the behaviours pressured.

Media Influence

Peer pressure from media influence can reinforce "perceived social norms" and stereotypes about how one should look, act and think.

Types of Peer Pressure

Spoken Peer Pressure

This type of peer pressure involves explicit communication from a person or group of people to engage in a specific behaviour or activity.

"Dare you to…."

Unspoken Peer Pressure

Unspoken pressure is communicated through implicit social clues, for example body language. This creates an environment that pressures on individuals to act in a specific way without giving explicit instructions.

Wearing expensive designer trainers instead of opting for affordable options

Direct Peer Pressure

This is the easiest pressure to recognise as it involves direct interaction and utilise persuasion, coercion or threats.
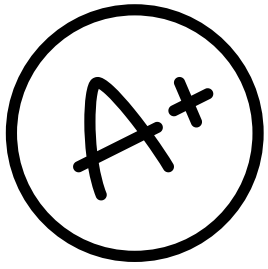
"If you don't steal from that shop, you can't hang about with us"

Indirect Peer Pressure

This is less obvious than direct peer pressure, as it relies on social cues and nonverbal behaviours that place subtle constraints upon social behaviours

Smoking, despite knowing the health risks because friends smoke socially and they want to fit in
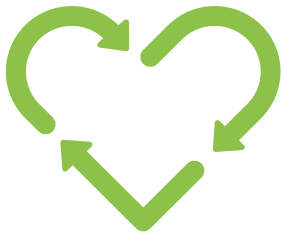
Examples

Academic Performance
Friends can motivate each other to study harder and achieve better grades

Fashion Trends
Young people can feel pressure to conform to current styles or trends popular within their friendship groups

Environmental Consciousness
Peers can influence each other to adopt eco-friendly habits like recycling

Encouraging Sports Participation
Peers can encourage their friends to participate in physical activities like playing in a sports team, leading to an increased physical health and social skills
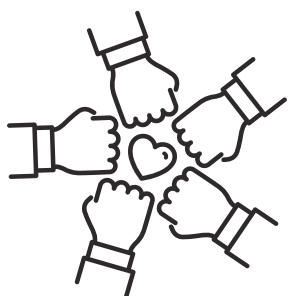
Seeking Help for Mental Health Issues
Those who may hesitate to seek help for mental health issues might choose to do so when seeing peers receive help and support from others in similar situations

Promoting Volunteering and Pro-Social Action

Collaborating with friends on a volunteer project can instil a sense of belonging and pro-social behaviour whilst strengthening relationships through shared experiences

Healthy Eating Habits

Eating together with peers and adopting good dietary choices, such as eating nutritious food can promote healthy lifestyles amongst young people

Encouraging Social Awareness

Peers sharing information about current social justice concerns affecting their local are may encourage young people to be more active citizens, supporting causes that have positive impacts within their communities
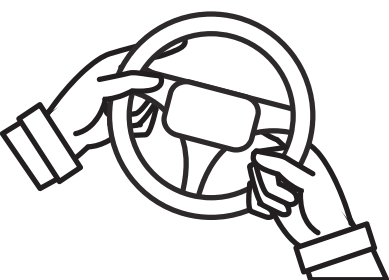
Isolation

This type of peer pressure involves excluding or ostracizing someone who doesn't conform to group behaviours or expectation. This clip from the film Mean Girls highlights this form of peer pressure.

Missing Education

Children and young people who regularly miss education may influence their peers into doing the same

Unsafe Driving Practices

Peer influence from a group with reckless driving habits can encourage risky behaviours behind the wheel, leading teenagers and young adults to take dangerous risks when driving

Cheating

There is pressure on children and young people to perform academically and this can lead for some students to cheat. This could be copying homework or other behaviours that impact on their academic integrity

Excessive Time Spent Online

If a child or young person's friends are all online for instance playing online games they may feel pressured into playing the game so they feel they are involved

Participating in Inappropriate Behaviours

A child or young person could participant in inappropriate behaviours such as anti-social behaviour, sexual harassment as it is the "perceived social norm" as they want to fit in with their peers.

Unhealthy habits

A child or young person could participant in unhealthy habits for example experimenting with smoking or drugs as they want to fit in with their peers.

Consequences of Peer Pressure

Remember that peer pressure can result in both positive and negative consequences. From engaging in risky behaviours to increasing confidence. It is important to show all aspects when teaching PSHE

Negative Consequences of Peer Pressure

Engaging in Risky Behaviours
Through peer pressure children and young people may engage in risky behaviours or harmful activities.

Impact on Self-Esteem
Conforming to group expectations that do not align to personal values may lead to internal conflict that impact on an individuals self-esteem.

Impact on Relationships with Family
If children and young people are engaged in risky behaviours or harmful activities this can cause conflict with family members.

Impact on Academic Achievement
If children and young people are missing their education this will impact on their ability to achieve their academic potential.

Impact on Mental Health
If children and young people are suppressing their true emotions, this can increase the risk of developing mental health conditions such as depression or anxiety.

Poor Decision-Making Skills
Reliance on peer approval may lead to a child or young person overlooking potential consequences, resulting in them having poor decision making skills that consider longer-term outcomes.

Positive Consequences of Peer Pressure

Encouragement towards Healthy Habits
People develop healthier habits through peers who motivate them to participate in physical activity or healthy eating habits that lead to a more positive overall well-being.

Increased Sense of Civic Responsibility
Getting involved in activism and participating in socially conscious projects enables young people to have a positive impact on their local communities and also to find out their passions and interests.

Increased Confidence
Getting involved in activism and participating in socially conscious projects enables young people to have a positive impact on their local communities and also to find out their passions.

Improved Character Development
Those groups with positive peer pressure support building life skills like teamwork, leadership collaboration idea sharing and communication

Tips for Coping with Peer Pressure

With thanks to Rose, 20, Young Minds for sharing these top tips, that we have adapted.

Stay True to your values

When a child or young person is experiencing pressure, they can lose sight of what truly matters to them.

PSHE creates an opportunity for young people to consider their values. Ensure that the curriculum provides opportunities for children and young people to explore their own values.

Find your Group

It is natural for people to change and for peer groups to change to. People do not have to be friends forever, especially if they make you feel uncomfortable. There will be people out there who "get you", even if you haven't found them yet. Ensure that the curriculum shows that friendships change over time, and that children and young people have the skills to be able to make new friends.

The "Escape Plan"
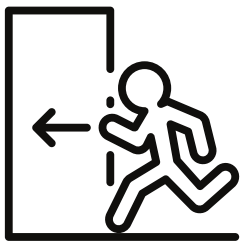
It can sometimes help if people have created an escape plan beforehand.

Utilise PSHE sessions to enable children and young people to create their own escape plan scenario that they can utilise in real-life.

Find Positive Coping Mechanisms

Peer pressure can cause feelings of anxiety or nervousness. Writing down worries in a notebook, practising simple relaxation and mindfulness, or speak to a Trusted Adult about their feelings.

PSHE sessions should help children and young people to develop these skills.
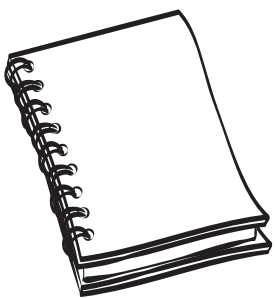
Knives and Pressure

Some young people carry weapons to feel protected, because of peer pressure or to feel powerful. Our Knife Crime & PSHE pack has more information to support professionals delivering education sessions on this topic.

A National Lottery Funded report "Serious Youth Violence" (2019) shows the following risk factors that may indicate people who are more likely to become involved in violence. This shows where some of the pressure may come from for children and young people to carry knives. Professionals are reminded that just because a child or young person has a large number of risk factors this does not mean they definitely will become involved in violence, but can help to identify people who may need support in recognising or creating protective factors.

Risk factors

FAMILY
Member of family involved in gangs
Parent in prison
Disrupted family life
Substance abuse
Domestic violence
Child abuse or neglect
Limited parental supervision

INDIVIDUAL FACTORS
Exposure to violence, Impulsiveness, Low school achievement, Truanting, Poor problem solving skills, Low self esteem, Mental health, Special educational needs, Brain injury, Positive attitude to delinquency, Substance use, Gang membership

PEERS
Delinquent peers
Peer preasure

IMPACT
Poor mental health
Poor relationships
Poor outcomes

SCHOOL
Low school performance
Bullying
Truancy
School exclusion
Having a positive attitude to delinquency

SOCIETAL
What society expects from you
e.g glamourisation of gangs
Stereotypes

COMMUNITY
Housing problems
Gang activity and crime in the neighbourhood
Deprivation (poverty)

#THE DITCH BLADE

Gangs and Pressure

For many young people the term 'gang' is used to describe a group of friends who hang around together. Some gangs are involved in crime, such as County Lines, they may be violent and may fight other gangs or carry weapons. Young people can feel pressure to join a gang for many reasons including:

They feel a need for protection, security or safety

For power, money, sex, respect and status
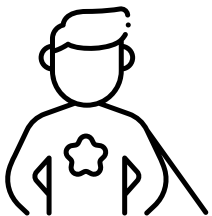
For a sense of identity and to feel part of a family

To feel accepted by others

Gangs are common in their local area

Fear of intimidation

They do not have a positive role mode to help and guide them

They feel peer pressure to join a gang

Boredom as there is nothing else to do

It seems attractive and young people think it is cool

Grooming and initiation is the term used to describe the process children as young as 10 years old go through without their knowledge but are identified by older gang members, who utilised vulnerabilities to offer them protection, security, a sense of belonging. Initiation is the term used once a young person has earned their position within the gang by committing acts of criminality.

The Pan-Staffordshire PSHE Education Service's pack Child Criminal Exploitation & PSHE provides more information about this type of criminal exploitation and County Lines.

Childline has created these tips to help people who are feeling pressured to be in a gang:

1   Remember no one has the right to pressure you

2   Spend more time with friend's who are not involved in the gang, or places where you know they won't be

3   Talk to a trusted adult or organisation like Childline if you are people forced into a gang.

There can then be pressure into doing things like stealing, carrying drugs or weapons. Criminal exploitation is child abuse where children and young people are manipulated and coerced into committing crimes.

Some young people may already be involved in gangs and want to leave but be worried about their safety. It is important to reinforce that it is possible to leave a gang safely and without any problems. Childline shares these tips with young people who want to leave a gang.,

1. Try to spend less time with the gang and find friends who are not in gangs

2. Try to avoid places where you know the gang will be

3. Speak to someone you trust like a family member, teacher or youth worker

4. Contact Gangsline for free advice and support from ex-gang members

5. Call the police by dialling 999 for urgent help if you are in danger

6. Focus on things that you enjoy like sports, music, reading or finding new hobbies

Sex and Pressure

Young people can feel pressure around sharing images, sex and sexual activity. It is important that young people understand their rights and responsibilities around this topic.

It is important to remind young people that they only person who can say if they are ready for sex if themselves.

In this <u>video</u> created for Childline talks about having sex for the first time featuring Hannah Witton.

This checklist can help young people to ensure they have thought about their decision. A person should be able to answer "yes" to all of these questions before they are ready.

- Do you feel you could say no if you wanted to, but you still want to have sex?
- Do you have fun together without anything sexual involved?
- Do you each want it for yourself, not for the other person or to fit in with friends or others expectations of you?
- Are you certain that nobody is forcing you, pressuring you or coercing you?
- Have you and your partner discussed using condoms and contraception, agreed what happens next and whether to tell your friends afterwards or not and have you talk about the implications if a pregnancy occurs?

It is important to reiterate to young people that even if they are ready for sex, it does not mean that have to have sex. It is their choice and no-one else's.

No-one should feel pressured into doing something sexual until they are ready and want to.
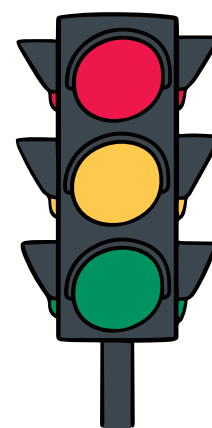
When it comes to sexuality, the term used to describe how some expresses themselves in a sexual way (their behaviours, attractions, like, dislikes and preferences, everyone is unique. This means that not everyone will share the same desire and expectation as others. As such, communication is key; it is the best way to ensure that partners understand each other and can in engage in sexual activity, when they are ready, and that they find enjoyable, fulfilling and safe for everyone involved.

Talking about sex with partner(s) is important for exploring consent. Everyone needs to feel comfortable and able to express what they do or do not want from a sexual encounter, and to know that they will be listened to and their choices respected.

Before any sexual activity, conversations about sex should take place. This helps partners to understand each others boundaries and creates space to share concerns.

When it comes to sex no-one should ever feel that they have to do something that they are no comfortable with or do not want to do. Everyone involved must be consenting at al times.

Just because a person has consented to do one thing does not mean they have consent to something else. It is completely okay to say no or stop at any point if they do not want to continue.

To consent means to agree to something. When it comes to sex or sexual activity this can include kissing, sexual touching, oral, anal and vaginal sex with a penis or another other type of object.

The Sexual Offences Act (2003) states that consent is when a person "agrees by **choice** and has the **freedom** and **capacity** to make that choice.

This is important to highlight as it means that even if someone says say i.e. makes a choice, it may be that legally they were not able to give consent. This is often they case when a person is being exploited or abused, they believe they are consenting i.e. saying yes, but they do not have the freedom to make this choice.

The Consent Triangle

Based upon the Fire Triangle, that helps people to learn the necessary ingredients required for most fires. The Consent Triangle providers an easy illustration to represent what is required for someone to be able to give consent to sexual activity. All three elements must be present for the activity to be consensual. This is important to recognise as young people who are being abuse may believe the are consenting, but do not have the freedom to make that decision.

Freedom | Capacity
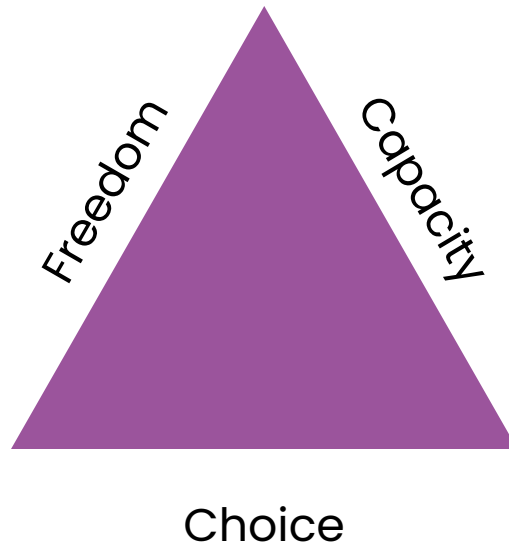
Choice

Choice - The person can say either yes or no

Freedom - Nothing bad would happen to them if they said no. For instance being threatened with violence, or they are being pressured into it

Capacity - Can the person physically and/or mentally able to make a choice and to understand the consequences of that choice. It's the same as the law that says someone may be physically able to drive a car when they are drunk but they are not mentally able to - the law recognises that when a person is drunk or high they do not have true capacity to consent to sex. They do not have to be passed out, like with drink driving someone can still be physically able to have sex but they can't give legal consent.
Capacity can also be affected by age, or some types of learning disabilities.

Consent is not ongoing, and just because a person said yes once, does not mean it is always a yes, it needs to be negotiated every time. Consent is contextual which means if a person agreed to a sexual activity with particular conditions e.g. wearing of a condom, the consent is ties to this. If the sexual activity takes place outside of this stipulation then the activity is not consensual.

Sharing Images

Nobody should feel pressured into sharing sexual messages or images.

The research, <u>Not Just Flirting</u> highlighted that often boys say they send nude images because they think girls will like them and they want to be sent images in return, while girls are more likely to say they share them because they feel under pressure to do so and that they feel 'disgusted' when they are sent images they don't want.
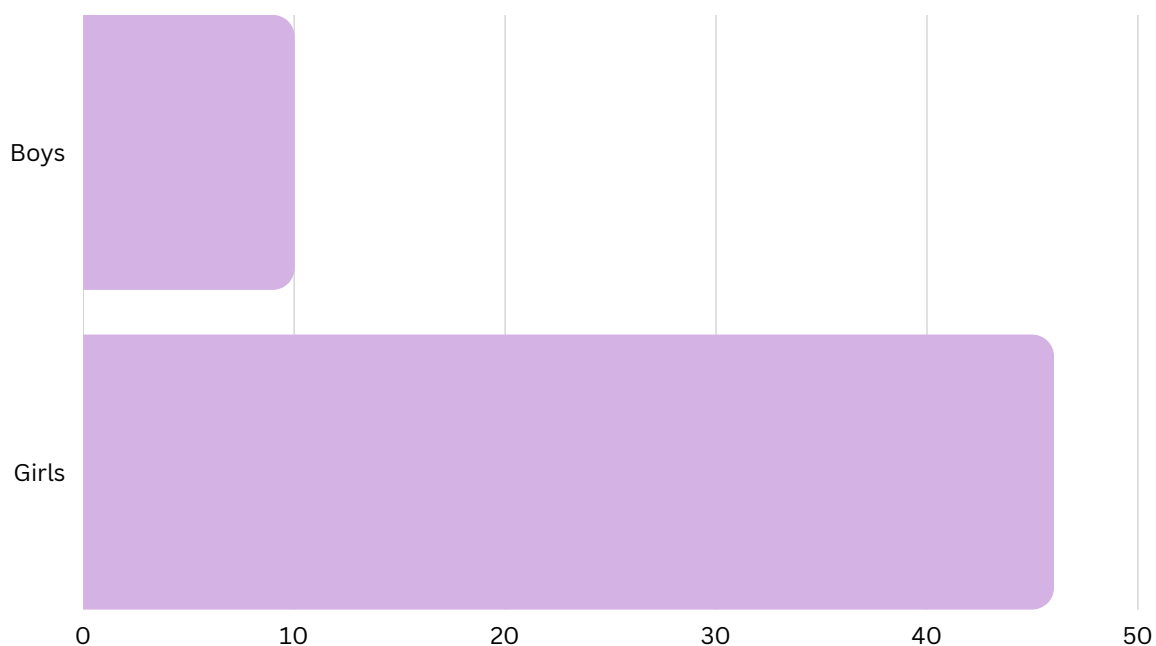
Not Just Flirting showing the number of responses (%) of young people who have nudes or nearly nudes because they felt pressured into it.

It is illegal to send naked images or videos of, or to, people under 18 years old.

This law is there to protect children and young people rather than criminalise them.

Being pressured or forced to send nudes is a form of sexual exploitation. It is not okay and nobody has the right to do this to anybody else.

Sexualised Behaviour

OFSTED's Review of Sexual Abuse in Schools and Colleges found that sexual harassment occurs so frequently that it has become 'commonplace'. For example, 92% of girls, and 74% of boys, said sexist name-calling happens a lot or sometimes to them or their peers. The frequency of these harmful sexual behaviours means that some children and young people consider them normal.

This is further reinforced by a survey commissioned by BBC Radio 5 Live and BBC Bitesize that found out of 2,000 young people aged 13-18, more than a quarter of girls (27%) stated they had experienced sexual harassment in some form and more than one in ten (12%) males.

This can add pressure on children and young people to use particular language or behaviours.

The Hackett's Continuum supported by the NSPCC enables professionals working with children and young people to recognise and appropriately respond to sexualised behaviours. Our Sexualised Behaviours & PSHE Pack has further information to support professionals delivering PSHE education in this area.

It is important to explore your organisation's culture and approach to tackling sexual harassment and abuse. Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire's Violence Reduction Alliance created a campaign "Make No Excuses" to support, advise and help educate against harassment which can cause fear and intimidation for those who experience it.

Drugs and Pressure

Frank has suggested ten ways that young people can deal with pressure to take drugs.

1 Remember you are not alone. It is easy to think that you are the only one who has not tried drugs but actually, most young people don't take drugs.

2 Work out where you stand on issues like sex, drugs and alcohol. Knowing your own mind makes it easier to stay true to you.

3 Prepare yourself. Think about how you'd like to respond when someone offers you drugs so you know what to say.

4 Try to understand who's offering you the drugs and why. Friends should understand if you say no, people you don't know you very well may expect something in return.

5 Say no firmly but clearly and without making a big deal about it. If they try to persuade you, don't feel like you have to change your mind.

6 Remember that, although they may not show it, your mates will respect you more if you're assertive and clear about what you do and don't want to do.

7 Take a look around. You'll soon see that you're not the only one worrying about what other people think of you. Try to focus on your own opinion of yourself - in the end, that's all that matters.

8 Worried about your mates being pressured? Don't keep it to yourself, talk to them, or someone you trust.

9 If you're finding it hard to be yourself within your group, take a step back, and think about whether it's time to find a new crowd to hang out with.

10 Before trying anything new it makes sense to know what's what. You can find out more about different drugs on the Drugs A to Z or call FRANK on 0300 123 6600 at any time, day or night.

Social Media and Pressure

96% of children and young people view online video-sharing platforms e.g. YouTube or TikTok.

YouTube was the most used online platform among 3-17-year-olds (88%), followed by WhatsApp (55%), TikTok (53%), Snapchat (46%), Instagram (41%) and Facebook (34%). Use of WhatsApp, TikTok and Snapchat increased from 2021 (up from 53%, 50% and 42% respectively), while Facebook was less popular this year (down from 40%) (Ofcom, 2023).

With children and young people consuming their information this way it is important to recognise that Influencers are having a greater impact on the lives of children and young people than ever before in both positive and negative ways.

Influencers can speak out and promote things like body positivity, spreading messages against harmful ideology around masculinity, the #metoo movement (which rapidly changed the way people thought about and approach sexual harassment and assault).

Influences also have a negative impact with 23% of girls aged 11-21 years stating they have seen images of influencers or celebrities undergoing cosmetic procedures that have made them consider getting it for themselves (Girl Guiding, 2023).

There has also been an increase of pressure on what it means to be a "man", with influencers like Andrew Tate creating discussions both in and outside of the classroom. 16-17 year old boys were 21% more likely to have consumed content from Andrew Tate (79%) than to say that they had heard of Rishi Sunak (58%), Sadiq Khan (44%) of Keir Starmer (32%) (Hope not Hate, 2023)

With this increasing pressure professionals have a responsibility to equip children and young people with the skills to be able to respond to this type of pressure.

Body Image and Pressure

Body image is how we think and feel about ourselves physically, and how we believe others may see us.

The NSPCC's Young People's Board for Change discuss Body Image in this short video.

More than 8 in 10 girls aged 11- 21 think there's too much discussion about women's body shape in the media. The impact of the media is further reinforced by boys, with 3 in 4 girls aged 11-21 agreeing boys think girls should look like the images in the media (Girl Guiding, 2023). In the same report almost 2 in 5 girls aged 11-21 stated they feel bad about how they look after seeing images online where people are edited to look perfect

It is important to remember that boys and young men may also struggle with Body Image. In 2021, a report showed that almost half of UK men said poor body image affected their mental health (CALM).

In young people, body dissatisfaction is linked to risk-taking behaviour sand mental health problems.

Be Real found that 36% agreed they would do "whatever it took" to look good, with 57% saying they had considered going on a diet and 10% considering cosmetic surgery. Among secondary school males, 10% said they would consider taking steroids to achieve their goals.

There are lots of benefits to social networking. They can allow users to stay connected with friends and family. They can also learn many different things, from make-up or gaming tutorials to making slime, or how to create their own videos.

With so many influencers and users sharing photos, children and young people can feel under pressure to conform to the 'ideal' body and lifestyle. It's important to talk about positive body image and help children see that what others post is a curated version of their life, and to question what they see online.

Children and young people may be very focused on the number of likes or comments their posts gets, which can leave them feeling like they are good enough, or as popular as someone else. Instagram has an option to turn off likes on post -this can help to ease the pressure.

Young Minds has suggested different things that young people can do if they are worried about how they look:

1

Be kind to yourself - Try not to compare yourself to the images seen online and in magazines, which are often digitally changed to make them look "perfect" - they do not reflect how people look in real life.

2

Notice how social media is affecting the way you feel about your body - There can be lots of pressures online to have the "perfect" body when we compare ourselves to different people. Unfollow accounts that make you feel bad, and try following accounts that make you feel good instead.

3

Focus on the good things - Focus on things you like about yourself, and the parts of your body that you like.

4

Spend time with people who make you feel positive about yourself - IT might help to write down the nice things people say about you, and not just about how you look. Remember, people value you for many reasons.

5

What would you say to a friend - Think about what advice you would give a friend if they told you they were struggling with the way they look, and remember that advice whenever you start having negative thoughts.

6

Talk to someone you trust - It could be parents/carers or wider family members, like older cousins, aunts or uncles. Outside of home it could be a teacher, neighbour, a close family friend or someone from a club you attend,

Gender Stereotypes and Pressure

Gender roles in society can create certain expectations, and the pressure of gender stereotypes can often get ugly. Whilst there have been many conversations about "Feminism" and tackling gender stereotypes around girls and women e.g. "like a girl" there hasn't been the same level of discourse around "Masculinity", this has led to an increase in education settings being concerned about the impact of online influences that promote misogynistic rhetoric.

Much of this type of content taps into insecurities about body image and agency. The focus is on money, success and power also plays on financial and status insecurities that may lead to risky and even illegal behaviours. In some extreme circumstances, boys can also become radicalised via involvement in forums and communities that promote and celebrate violent behaviours, including rape, child abuse and terrorist acts.

- The PSHE Association has produced guidance on how to address misogyny, toxic masculinity and social media influence through PSHE education.
- Hope not Hate have put together an educational resource around how to tackle Andrew Tate's extreme misogyny and it's impact on young people.
- Durham University have created a toolkit on Engaging with Men and Boys about Masculine Gender Norms.
- National Education union has a resource "Working with boys and young men to prevent sexism and sexual harassment".
- The Fawcett Society has shared some ideas around how to tackle gender stereotypes.

Gender stereotypes start for younger children, for example, with ideas about what jobs men and women can do. As they progress, gender stereotypes lead to a social norm that says that girls and women are worth less than men, they are sexual objects who should be sexually available to men and they should want male comments on their bodies and looks. It is thee attitudes that form the foundations for sexism and sexual harassment within education settings and society.

Advertising and Pressure

The advertising industry revolves around creating commercial messaging to encourage the purchase of new or improved products or service - often of things that the consumer does not need or require. In 2020, a survey showed that more than 50% of consumers said that adverts had impacted them to buy products they did not think or know they needed.

Social Media has increased the amount of adverts that an individual is exposed to. TikTok is one of the newer social media platforms. A recent Kantar survey found that 67% of respondents agreed that ads on TikTok capture their attention, which is a 10% lead on other social media channels.

Psychological appeals form the basis of the most successful ads. Going beyond the standard ad pitch about the product's advantages, psychological appeals try to reach our self-esteem and persuade us that we will feel better about ourselves if we use certain products. For example an advertisement of a toy will often be framed as the act of a loving parent rather than an extravagance. The consumer will then purchase the toy not because their child needs it but because it makes them feel good about what generous parents they are.

There are specific requirements for advertisers who want to target children and young people - for this purpose a child is defined as someone under the age of 16 years old.

Gambling and Pressure

31% of 11-16 years old spent their own money on any gambling activity in the 12 months prior to the Gambling Commission Survey (2022). The most common type of gambling activity that young people spent their own money on were legal or did not feature age restricted products.

- Playing arcade gaming machines such as penny pusher or claw grab machines (22 percent)
- Placing a bet for money between friends or family (15 percent)
- Playing cards with friends or family for money (5 percent).

23% of young people spent their own money on regulated forms of gambling.

The majority of 16-25 years do at least half of their gambling with friends, with likelihood of gambling with friends increasing with higher Problem Gambling Severity Index (PGSI) scores. The opposite is true for adults, where problem gambling is more often linked to lone gambling. Social gambling experiences can create peer pressure as well as skewing people's view of what is 'normal' gambling behaviour, and some young people feel encouraged by friends to spend and stake more.

Advertising is primarily a trigger or 'nudge' to play as opposed to the reason to start gambling, however more targetable marketing channels – such as social media and email – are more influential.

In 2022, a survey found that young people who have ever seen or heard any gambling advert or sponsorship, the vast majority (82 percent) said that it did not prompt them to spend money on gambling when they did not otherwise plan to.
However, 7 percent say that the advert or sponsorship did prompt them to gamble, increasing to 13 percent of 11 to 16 year olds who have spent their own money on gambling in the last 7 days.

The Gambling Commission recognises eight different types of gambling typologies:

1. **Social Play** - occurs when friends go out together to gamble. It is something that everyone in the group likes doing and the activity sets up a really enjoyable way to spend time together. The opportunity to win money adds to the fun, but the activity is the main focus.

2. **Wise Decision** -Those that are motivated to gamble by this typology have a bit of a routine to their gambling. They know what they are doing and believe that their knowledge of the game gives them an advantage and the confidence in the win. The main aim is to win money and the enjoyment of the gamble is not as important.

3. **Me Time** - This moment is about someone having a bit of 'me time', it allows someone to switch off and get some down time. It can feel like a treat or it can be to fill a boring bit of a day, but it is essentially done to pass the time. Winning is desired whilst passing the time, although it is not essential to its enjoyment.

4. **Just What I Do** -Those that fall into this typology don't really think about gambling, it's just part of their routine, something they do with very little thought. Ultimately players believe in the distant possibility of a big win but can be disillusioned with the smaller wins.

5. **Along for the Ride** - This typology is for someone who isn't particularly interested in the gambling activity itself, they are more interested in the opportunity to meet up with friends or family and the gambling is just something they do while they are together. They understand they may lose money as a result of the gambling activity but they are OK with that.

6. **Money to Burn** - This typology is for those that have already won money, have spare change in their pocket or been given free goes/spins/credit. It comes from the desire to turn something small or free into something bigger. It will happen when an activity that is already in a persons' repertoire is triggered by having spare change/spins/credit/winnings to play with.

7. **Feeling Lucky** - This is an opportunity to gamble which may come along where someone just feels 'lucky'. It feels like the stars have aligned and they just want to take a chance. Play is driven by the belief in the win, more than the desire to take part, however the activity must still feel fun. Players are also highly influenced in the moment.

8. **For the Money** - This typology is all about the big win, players know that winning is a long shot and that the result is all down to chance but they are still willing to take part in case they do happen to win lots of money. Players aren't particularly engaged with the gambling activity itself, they are focused on the chance of winning.

Health and Pressure

Children and young people can experience pressure that can influence their health.

in 2019, the YMCA found that 44% of young people have concerns about their studies and exam pressures. This has been linked to the rise in mental health difficulties that young people are facing today. The Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families has a resource to support children and young people who struggle with exam stress. Young Minds has produced a guide for parents and carers to help their child manage exam stress.

Peer pressure plays a role in influences decisions that can have impact on their health, including diet and nutrition, smoking/vaping, drugs, alcohol, physical activity. It is important to remember this influence can be positive as well as negative.

Media, including social media can also influence a person's decisions around their health and wellbeing.

Influencing Younger Peers

Recognising the importance of peer relationships, some organisations have successfully implemented mentoring schemes.

Peer mentoring is a form of support where pupils are matched with a mentor who is similar to them in age, gender, ethnicity, and/or background. The mentor provides support to the mentee on a one-to-one basis, offering guidance and advice on a range of issues including academics, social life, and wellbeing.

Peer mentoring has been shown to be an effective intervention for mental health support in schools. A study by the University of Sussex found that peer mentors had a positive impact on the mental health of the mentees, with benefits for both the mentors and the mentees including improved self-esteem, increased empathy, and reduced anxiety levels. Peer mentoring can also help to build resilience and coping skills in young people.

The Wham Plan in Staffordshire is a series of emotional wellbeing sessions designed and delivered by young people, for young people aged 11-18. This service is available for free to school and youth organisations across Staffordshire (excluding Stoke-on-Trent).

Change Your Mind is an volunteering and enrichment programme where 16-17 years old plan and deliver health and wellbeing workshops to 10-11 years in their local area. There is a charge to any secondary school who wishes to engage with the programme.

Perception V Reality

Children and young people can feel pressure to fit in because of "perceived" social norms. These statistics can help professionals to encourage children and young people to see the reality.
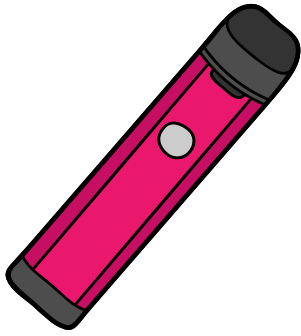
In 2023 20.5% of children had tried vaping, up from 15.8% in 2022. the majority had only vaped once or twice (11.6%), whilst 7.6% were currently vaping (3.9% less than once a week) and the remainder saying they no longer vape.

ASH, (June 2023)

40% of 11-15 years old said they had ever had an alcoholic drink

NHS, (2021)

17% of young people have used a Class A drug within the past 12 months (approximately 1.3 million young people). This is an increase of 11% in 2021.

The Mix (2022)

99%

99% of young people do not carry a knife

Fearless.org

Sharing nudes is most prevalent among those aged 15 and over, with 17% saying they had shared a nude or sexual photo of themselves. This increases from 4% at age 13 and 7% at age 14.

Internet Matters (2020)
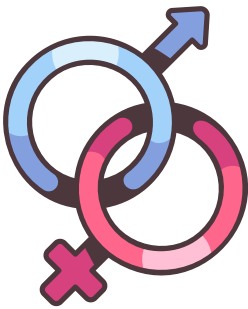
There is limited representative data on young people's sexual activity in the UK. The most definitive survey was undertaken in 2012 - The National Survey of Sexual Attitudes and Lifestyle. The results confirmed the fairly consistent finding that the average age of first heterosexual intercourse is 16 years.
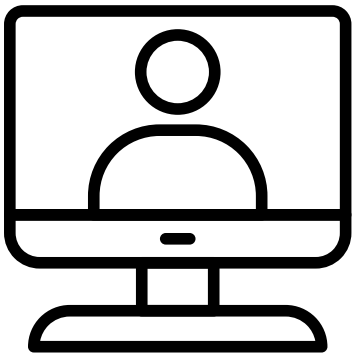
One in ten children have watched pornography by the age of nine.

Children's Commissioner, (2023)

31% of 11 to 16 spent their own money on any gambling activity in 12 months prior to completing the Young People and Gambling Survey.

Gambling Commission (2022)

Contextual Safeguarding

Contextual safeguarding recognises the impact of the public/social context on young people's lives, and consequently their safety. Contextual safeguarding seeks to identify and respond to harm and abuse posed to young people outside their home, either from adults or other young people.
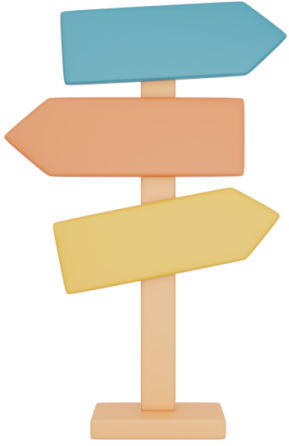Using Contextual safeguarding can enable professionals to build a holistic picture of the child or young person's individual factors and also identify where and by whom interventions can occur.

More information on contextual safeguarding can be found here

Neighbourhood

School

Peers

Home/Family

Child/Young Person
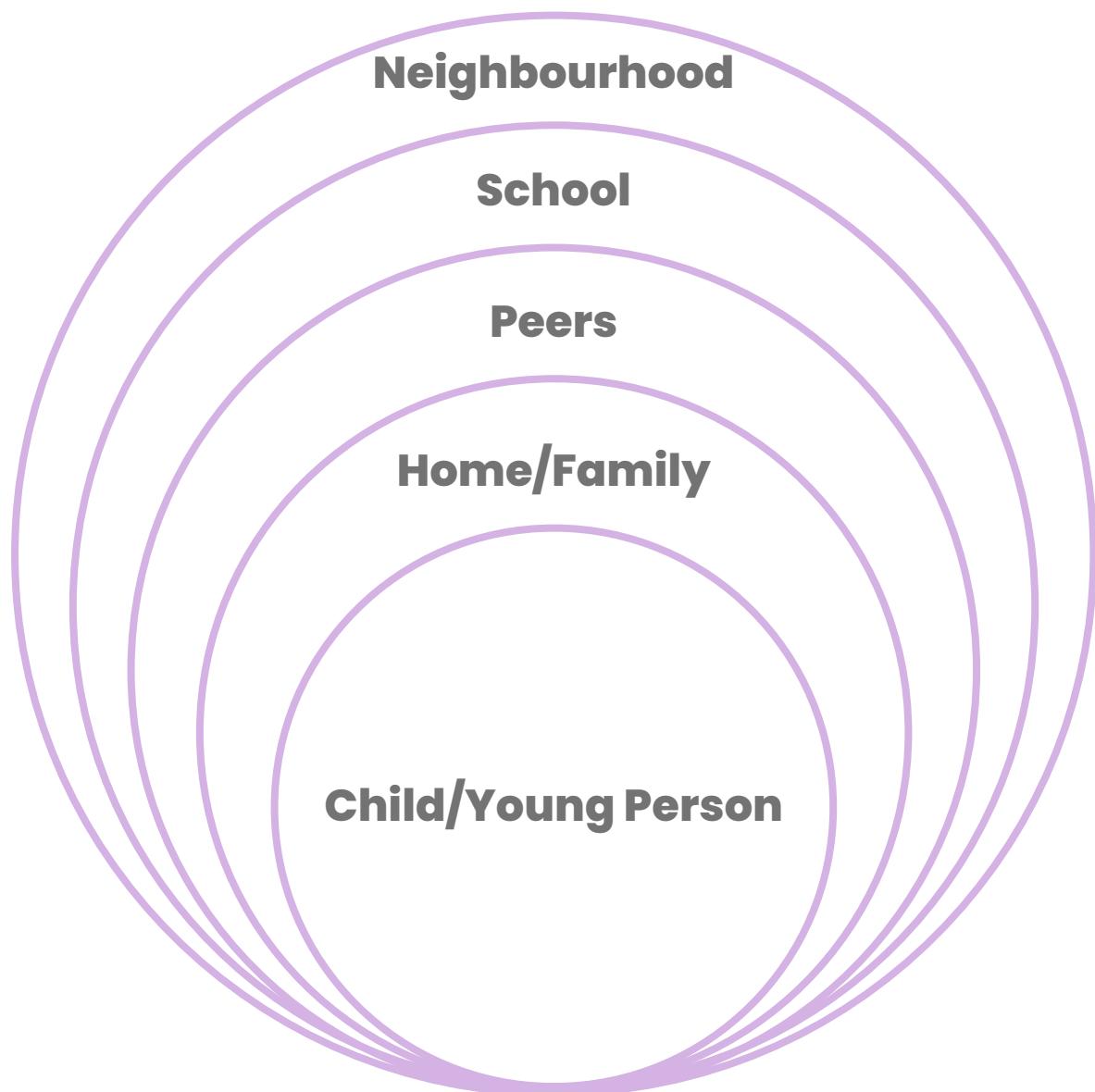
Signposting Information:

It is important to signpost children and young people to relevant local and national organisations who can provide further advice and support.

General Support
School Nursing Service - provide details of any local drop-in
Designated Safeguarding Lead/Pastoral Team

Specific Mental Health and Emotional Support
Action for Children (Staffordshire only)
Changes (Stoke-on-Trent only)

Exploitation
Catch22

Substances
CDAS (Stoke-on-Trent only)
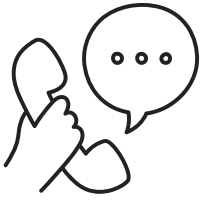T3 Stars (Staffordshire only)

National Organisations:
Childline - Peer Pressure
Fearless - Knife Crime/Exploitation
Talk to Frank - Drugs
GamCare - Gambling

Useful Contacts:

If you would like more information or support about pressure please contact:

Pressure and Gangs/Exploitation
Catch22
If you have concerns that a young person is being exploited please complete a Risk Factor Matrix Form
Staffordshire or Stoke-on-Trent.

Pressure and Substances
If you have concerns about a child or young person's drug or alcohol use please contact:
CDAS (Stoke-on-Trent)
T3 STARS (Staffordshire)

Pressure and Knife Crime/Criminality
If you have concerns that a young person is involved in criminal activity including Knife Crime please contact the Youth Offending Team.

Staffordshire Youth Offending Team (North)-
01782 297 615
Staffordshire Youth Offending Team (South)-
01543 510 103
Referral Form

Stoke Youth Offending Team -
01782 235 858
Referral Form

Pressure and Extremism (including misogyny)
Staffordshire Police
01785 232 054

Peer Pressure/Body Image
School Nursing Staffordshire - 0808 178 0611
School Nursing Stoke-on-Trent - 0808 178 3374
Families Health and Wellbeing Service (Staffordshire)
Integrated 0-19 Health Visiting and School Nursing Service (Stoke on Trent)

If a referral to Children's Social Care is required, please contact:

Staffordshire:

Staffordshire Children's Advice Service - 0300 111 8007
Monday - Thursday 8.30am -5pm and Friday 8.30-4.30pm
Out of Hours - 0345 604 2886 / 07815 492613

Stoke:

CHAD - 01782 235 100
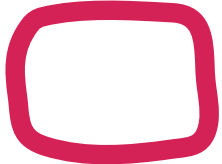Monday - Thursday 8.30am -5pm and Friday 8.30-4.30pm
Out of Hours - 01782 234 234
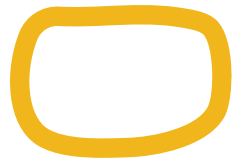
Further Reading:

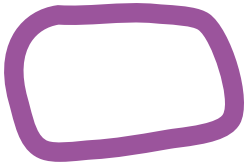- Mental Health Foundation - Am I good enough?

- BBC News - Girls Face More Pressure to be a Perfect Teenager

- Sarah-Jayne Blakemore - Investing Ourselves: The Secret Life of the Teenage Brain

- VeryWell Mind - What is Peer Pressure?

- SCVYS - Young People's Perceptions of Violence in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent

PSHE
Education
STOKE-ON-TRENT
STAFFORDSHIRE

SASCAL
STRONGER TOGETHER

Ellie Chesterton
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