Pornography
and PSHE Education

Professionals' Pack

2024

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Introduction

This pack aims to support education providers to deliver quality PSHE education around pornography 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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Local Quality Framework

We believe that for PSHE education to be effective it must:

- Be delivered in a safe learning environment based on the principles that prejudice, discrimination and bullying are harmful and unacceptable.

- Have clear learning objectives and outcomes and ensure sessions and programmes are well planned, resourced and appropriately underpinned by solid research and evidence.

- Be relevant, accurate and factual, including using the correct terminology.

- Be positively inclusive in terms of:

  - Age
  - Gender Identity
  - Race
  - Sex

  - Disability
  - Pregnancy and Maternity
  - Religion or Belief
  - Sexual Orientation

- Designed to include the development of knowledge, skills and values to support positive life choices.

- Use positive messaging, that does not cause shame or victim blaming.

- Challenge attitudes and values within society, such as perceived social norms and those portrayed in the media.

- Be reflective of the age and stage of the children and young people and be tailored to the environment and group.

- Utilise active skill-based learning techniques to encourage active participation.

- Ensure that children and young people are aware of their rights, including their right to access confidential advice and support services within the boundaries of safeguarding.

- Be delivered by trained, confident and competent professionals.

- Empower and involve children and young people as participants, advocates and evaluators in the development of PSHE education.

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 in creating 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 the panic zone it is not safe or appropriate for them or the participants to teach on the topic. This pack should help professionals 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.
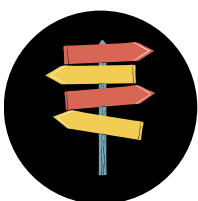
No. 06 — Signposting

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 from 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 <u>here</u>.

Young people should be informed of risks in a balanced and measured way through an approach that supports them to make informed, healthy, safe decisions and empowers 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
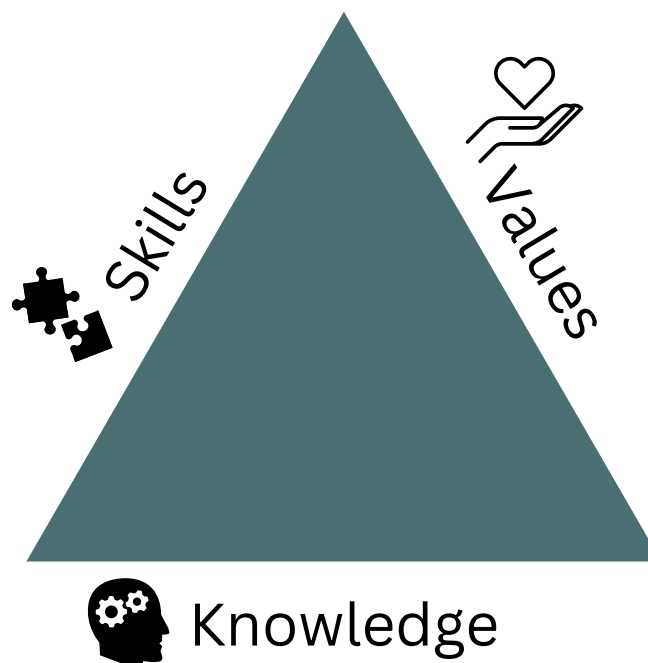
Pornography & PSHE

In 2022 the Sex Education Forum published a young people's poll that explored the experiences of RSE since the introduction of it's statutory status. This poll showed that 58% of respondents learnt not enough or nothing about pornography.

" Most children are left to fill in the gaps which is why there is a huge pornography problem in young adults which will never teach young men or women how to view their partner in a respectful way. "

Professionals who deliver PSHE education have a clear duty to teach about pornography, as highlighted in the statutory guidance. The principal aim of teaching children and young people about pornography is to keep them safe from harm.

As with other things, like junk food, alcohol and, illegal drugs, young people are likely to encounter pornography, and some of these will go on to view it regularly. This does not mean they will necessarily suffer harm, but there are risks. Young people therefore have a right to the knowledge and skills they need to manage situations involving pornography.

Brook was funded by the National Lottery to better understand how young people in Wales feel about pornography education and what can be done to improve it.

What young people want adults to know when it comes to young people and pornography:

- Stop being patronising!
- Don't assume
- Don't make it awkward
- How to answer questions if asked
- Don't make it weird
- Everyone has their own desires so be open about it!
- It sometimes feels embarrassing for young people to talk about it
- Actually educate people, don't mince words and feel embarrassed

When it comes to pornography, young people want to learn about:

- Information about the law
- How body standards can affect people
- Not everything seen is realistic
- There's more than heterosexual porn
- How porn can impact on relationships
- Female pleasure
- How religion/traditional lifestyles of family affect views on porn and sex

From this, Brook created ten top tips for professionals thinking about delivering education about pornography:

Know your stuff

No-one is expected to be an expert on pornography in order to teach it, it is important to have a good understanding of what pornography is, the potential impacts and risks and laws regarding porn. This pack will help you to learn more about it and how to talk to young people about it.

It's okay not to know the answer, signpost to safe sources, or do some more research and come back at a later date with the answer.

Create a safe, non-judgmental space

Creating a safe, non-judgmental space is a fundamental element of effective PSHE education. In creating this space, the parameters are set for exploring views and values. Our best practice guidance "Creating a Safe Learning Environment" can help.

Do not shame young people

It is natural to be curious about sex, and pornography is just one way a person might learn more. Young people should not be shamed for this natural curiosity.

Pornography is one of many ways young people might learn about sex and relationships, alongside other sources. What is important is that children and young people develop skills to weigh up the positives and negatives of each source of information, before talking about pornography in more detail.

Be balanced

Education sessions should explore the potential upsides and downsides to watching pornography, rather than scaremongering and framing pornography solely in negative terms.

Use facts - porn can reproduce unrealistic body ideals, it does not show consent or condoms being used and often shows high rates of violence . However, porn can be a way for people to learn about bodies, sex and can be a part of them exploring sexual pleasure and their sexuality.

The aim of the sessions should be to tell young people to watch pornography or not - it is to develop critical thinking skill if they do watch pornography or influenced by it in relationships, and to know the risks and the law.

5 Talk about consent and pornography

It is important to highlight that some young people will not watch to watch pornography and, just like sex and sexual activity, nobody should do anything they do not want to. If a young person is being pressured to watch pornography, either by a partner or somebody else, they should speak to an adult they trust.

6 Talk about the myths and realities of pornography

Pornography should not be used as a rule book on how to have sex in the real world as it can be unrealistic. This includes how long penetrative sex last for, what people's genitals look like and the importance of consent and contraception. Activities that help distinguish the myths around sex that porn reproduces and the realities of how sex should be, help to address this.

7 Responding to problematic porn usage

Many young people want to talk about "porn addiction". This isn't a diagnosis in the UK, it is better to talk about identifying a problematic relationship with pornography.

8 Give more information about the law

There is a misconception that young people under 18 will be criminalised for watching pornography. See our section on Pornography on the law for more information.

9 Be inclusive when talking about pornography, pleasure and stereotypes

LGBTQ+ young people report that it is important to make sure sessions are inclusive and mention that porn includes sex between lots of different people, and for some, this was a positive thing and a way of exploring their sexuality.

It's also important to mention there can be some harmful stereotypes in pornography in terms of gender, sexual orientation, and race. It is important to highlight false stereotypes to ensure everyone feels included in the session.

10 Signposting and Support

It is important that young people know they can ask questions outside of the session and seek support. At the end of the session(s) remind young people they can speak to a trusted adult and signpost to local and national support services.

Trauma Informed Approach

Being Trauma-Informed

It is important to be aware of the risks of educative interventions, if not delivered carefully. PSHE resources - when used with children and young people who have been affected by the topic being covered - can re-traumatise children and young people or induce vicarious trauma - this is defined as the feelings of trauma experienced by a third party when witnessing or engaging with the harm or trauma of another (Eaton, 2017).
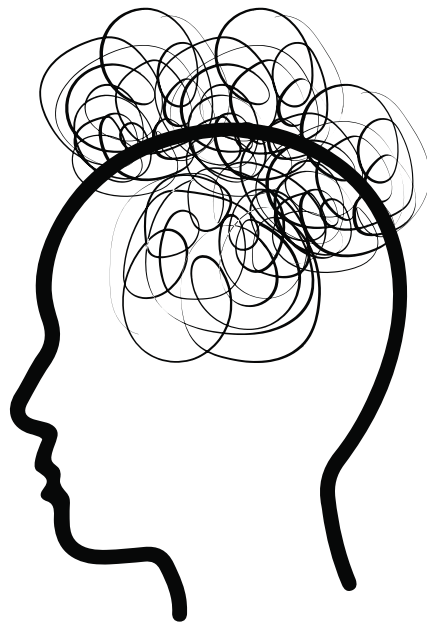
The National Youth Agency provides a free e-learning course to help professionals gain a greater understanding of trauma and how it affects mental and emotional wellbeing. The module provides tools and reflection space for professionals to enable them to better support young people in this area.

You can access the course here - you will need to create a Youth Work One account to be able to access the course.

Top Tips

- Do not use resources that include graphic images, victim blaming, or scenes of abuse.
- Ensure that the work is part of a planned, sequential curriculum that builds on prior knowledge.
- Work with your pastoral team to understand if there is anyone who could be affected by this scheme of work. Ask the individuals if they want to be included in the class or if they would prefer to do some other work - explain there will be no explanation given for their absence.
- Use resources only within class-sized groups and not within assemblies.
- Ensure that a trigger/content warning is given beforehand.
- Ensure there is plenty of time for class-based discussions and signposting and that children/young people do not move onto a different topic/lesson before having time to debrief.
- When exploring themes with the participants do not ask "What could x have done to not be a victim of…" or "What signs should they have spotted" . This encourages victim-blaming and abuse is never the fault of the child or young person.
- Use distancing techniques - Avoid questions or activities which encourage students to consider their personal experiences, or ask them to put themselves in a particular situation. It it more appropriate to ask "How do you think x is feeling?" or "How would you feel if x was your friend?" . This helps to develop skills of emotional literacy and empathy. You could also ask young people to imagine the response of "a young person, about your age who goes to school around here"
- How can you make it easy for participants to leave the room and communicate this in advance?
- How will you ensure parents/carers have information about this scheme of work to support it within the home?
- You might want to consider a Disassociation Game to close the session. This is a quick, light-hearted, unrelated activity following the plenary on learning from the session. The purpose of this is to help students emotionally detach themselves from the content of the session before they leave.

Tips for Communication

Communication difficulties

Special provisions 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.

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

Primary

PSHE Association

Key Stage 1

H28.	About rules and age restrictions that keep us safe
H34.	Basic rules to keep safe online, including what is meant by personal information and what should be kept private; the importance of telling a trusted adult if they come across something that scares them
R19.	Basic techniques for resisting pressure to do something they don't want to do and which may make them unsafe
L9.	That not all information seen online is true

Key Stage 2

H35.	About the new opportunities and responsibilities that increasing independence may bring
H37.	Reasons for following and complying with regulations and restrictions (including age restrictions); how they promote personal safety and wellbeing with reference to social media, television programmes, films, games and online gaming
H42.	About the importance of keeping personal information private; strategies for keeping safe online, including how to manage requests for personal information or images of themselves and others; what to do if frightened or worried by something seen or read online and how to report concerns, inappropriate content and contact

R28.	how to recognise pressure from others to do something unsafe or that makes them feel uncomfortable and strategies for managing this
L1.	To recognise reasons for rules and laws; consequences of not adhering to rules and laws
L11.	Recognise ways in which the internet and social media can be used both positively and negatively
L15.	Recognise things appropriate to share and things that should not be shared on social media; rules surrounding distribution of images
L16.	About how text and images in the media and on social media can be manipulated or invented; strategies to evaluate the reliability of sources and identify misinformation

SEND

PSHE Association:

SSS3 - Trust

Enhancement	- Describe how we might feel if someone has dared us to do something. - Explain or demonstrate strategies to resist pressure to behave in inappropriate ways. - 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.

SSS4 - Keeping Safe Online

Enhancement	- Identify basic rules for using social media, including age restrictions and why they exist. - Identify whom we can talk to, or report concerns to, if someone asks us for, or sends us, an image or information that makes us feel uncomfortable.

Enrichment	• Describe what happens during puberty, including mood swings, emotional changes, menstruation and wet dreams/ejaculation, hair growth, skin and voice changes. • Use correct vocabulary to name male and female reproductive organs. • Recognise that during and after puberty, some people enjoy masturbating, and this should be done in private.
Enhancement	• Identify reliable sources of advice on growing and changing.

DfE Statutory Guidance:

By the end of Primary pupils will know:

OR3.	The rules and principles for keeping safe online, how to recognise risks, harmful content and contact, and how to report them.
IS4.	Why social media, some computer games and online gaming, for example, are age restricted.
IS7.	Where and how to report concerns and get support with issues online.

PSHE Association

Key Stage 3

H3.	The impact that media and social media can have on how people think about themselves and express themselves, including regarding body image, physical and mental health
R5.	To recognise that sexual attraction and sexuality are diverse
R8.	That the portrayal of sex in the media and social media (including pornography) can affect people's expectations of relationships and sex
R11.	To evaluate expectations about gender roles, behaviour and intimacy within romantic relationships
R29.	The impact of sharing sexual images of others without consent
R30.	How to manage any request or pressure to share an image of themselves or others, and how to get help
R37.	The characteristics of abusive behaviours, such as grooming, sexual harassment, sexual and emotional abuse, violence and exploitation; to recognise warning signs, including online; how to report abusive behaviours or access support for themselves or others
L25.	To make informed decisions about whether different media and digital content are appropriate to view and develop the skills to act on them

Key Stage 4

H2.	How self-confidence, self esteem and mental health are affected positively and negatively by internal and external influences and ways of managing this

H3.	How different media portray idealised and artificial body shapes; how this influences body satisfaction and body image and how to critically appraise what they see and manage feelings about this
R8.	To understand the potential impact of the portrayal of sex in pornography and other media, including on sexual attitudes, expectations and behaviours
R22.	To evaluate different motivations and contexts in which sexual images are shared, and possible legal, emotional and social consequences
L27.	Strategies to critically assess bias, reliability and accuracy in digital content

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
R1.	How to articulate their relationship values and to apply them in different types of relationships
L23.	To be a critical consumer of online information in all its forms, including recognising bias, propaganda and manipulation

SEND

PSHE Association:

SSS4 - Keeping Safe Online

Core	• Recognise that not all information seen online is true.
Development	• Identify what we should do before we 'like', 'forward' or 'share' on social media and how this helps to keep us safe online. • Identify some possible risks of using social media. • Describe how we can respond, including getting help, if we see or are sent upsetting or inappropriate online content
Enrichment	• Identify sources of advice and support, and ways to report online concerns. • Identify how to make safe, reliable choices from search results

SSS6 –Public and Private

Core	• Explain that no one has the right to make us share a photo of ourselves, or give information about ourselves or others, online. • Identify reasons why being asked to share a photo of ourselves might not be a safe thing to do. • Explain why it is important to talk with a trusted adult before deciding whether to share a photo or personal information
Development	• Identify what is appropriate and inappropriate to share online. • Identify trusted adults who can help us if someone tries to pressurise us online. • Explain how to manage requests to share a photo, or information about ourselves or others online, including how to report.
Enrichment	• Recognise that sharing and/or viewing sexual images of anyone under 18 (including those created by anyone under 18) is against the law. • Explain what could happen next (e.g. police involvement, parent/carer involvement, prosecution) and the impact on self and others

Enhancement	• Explain and demonstrate how to ask for help and whom to go to if we have seen something upsetting or done something online that we are now worried about or regret.

CG4 - Intimate Relationships; Consent and Contraception

Development	• Identify expectations we may have of being in a romantic/intimate/physical relationship, which may include sex. • Recognise that although it may seem (in the media etc.) that everyone is having a sexual relationship, in reality this is not the case. • Identify sources of support with relationships and sex.
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. • Recognise that the portrayal of sex in the media and social media (including pornography) is an unrealistic representation of sexual behaviour and can affect people's expectations of relationships and sex.
Enhancement	• Recognise that viewing pornography can have ongoing harms and where and how to access help if concerned. • Describe different reliable sources of support regarding relationships, sex and sexual health and how to access them.

HL5 - Body Image

Foundation	• Identify and describe some different images of young people in pictures, magazines, TV programmes and social media.
Core	• Describe our thoughts and feelings about how different bodies are portrayed in the media.

Development	• Identify some ways in which images of people may be manipulated in the media/social media and therefore not reflect reality.

WILI2 - Managing Online Information

Foundation	• Recognise that not everything we see online is 'real' or 'true'
Core	• Recognise that not everything we see or read online is trustworthy; that some things that are written about are not real and are 'fake'

DfE Statutory Guidance:
By the end of Secondary pupils will know:

O2.	About online risks, including that any material someone provides to another has the potential to be shared online and the difficulty of removing potentially compromising material placed online.
O3.	Not to provide material to others that they would not want shared further and not to share personal material which is sent to them.
O4,	What to do and where to get support to report material or manage issues online.
O5.	The impact of viewing harmful content.
O6.	That specifically sexually explicit material e.g. pornography presents a distorted picture of sexual behaviours, can damage the way people see themselves in relation to others and negatively affect how they behave towards sexual partners
O7.	That sharing and viewing indecent images of children (including those created by children) is a criminal offence which carries severe penalties including jail.

IS1.	the similarities and differences between the online world and the physical world, including: the impact of unhealthy or obsessive comparison with others online (including through setting unrealistic expectations for body image), how people may curate a specific image of their life online, over-reliance on online relationships including social media, the risks related to online gambling including the accumulation of debt, how advertising and information is targeted at them and how to be a discerning consumer of information online

NYA Youth Work Curriculum:

HW1.	Promoting the positive physical, social, emotional and mental health of young people
HW2.	Helping young people make informed choices about how they live, approach risk and take responsibility for their own behaviour in relation to their lifestyle
HR1.	Offering relationship support and guidance to young people, including sex and relationship education, in settings and in a way chosen by young people
HR4.	Helping young people to understand and negotiate the difference between online and offline worlds

Useful Resources

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

Pornography

Books:
For professionals - We need to talk about pornography

Videos:
14-16 years - BBC Teach - Teaching Porn Awareness
9-11 years - Amaze.org - Staying Safe Online
11-14 years- Amaze.org - Porn is not sex ed
11-14 years - Amaze.org - Fact or Fiction

Lesson Plans:
For the latest resources please check out the Pornography heading in our Resource Library (registration required)
11-14 years - SWGfL - Let's Talk about Porn
14-16 years - NSPCC - Making Sense of Relationships: Pornography

Handouts:
Brook - Porn

Training:
Department for Education - Online Relationships (Primary), Online and Media (Secondary)
PSHE Association - DfE Webinar Pornography and the impact of viewing harmful content online
SWGfL Podcast - Pornography and Young People

DEVELOPING SUBJECT KNOWLEDGE

PORNOGRAPHY

With thanks to:

What is Pornography?

Pornography is not a new concept, it has been around for thousands of years, beginning as images of naked people or people engaging in sexual activity carved into cave walls or painted onto ancient pottery.

Pornography (porn) refers to explicit images or videos that show sexual activity or sexual images in a way that is designed to make the viewer sexually excited.

It is important to emphasise that images or videos that show under 18 should never be referred to as "child pornography" - these are **Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAMs).**

Child sexual abuse material is a result of children being groomed, coerced, and exploited by their abusers, and is a form of child sexual abuse. Using the term "child pornography" implies it is a sub-category of legally acceptable porn, rather than a form of child abuse and a crime. Using the term 'child pornography' minimises the harm experienced by children, which research shows is both long-lasting and devastating.

Referring to child sexual abuse materials as pornography puts the focus on how the materials are used, as opposed to the impact they have on children. Changing our language to talk about child sexual abuse materials leads everyone to face up to the impact on children and recognise the abuse.

Why do people watch porn?

It is important to remember that not everyone watches porn and those who do watch it for a variety of reasons.

Here are some reasons people may watch pornography:

The main reason some people choose to watch pornography is for arousal, which could be by themselves or with a partner(s).

People may also choose to watch porn to:
- Learn more about a particular sexual act they have heard/read about
- Discover new things about sex or sexuality
- Show off or have a laugh with friends

Pornography is not confined to dedicated adult sites. The Children's Commissioner for England found that Twitter was the online platform where young people were most likely to have seen pornography. Fellow mainstream social networking platforms Instagram and Snapchat rank closely after dedicated pornography sites.

Research by the British Board of Film Classification "Young People, Pornography and Age Verification (202) found that many children, some as young as 7 years old - stumble on pornography online, with 61% of 11-13 years describing their viewing as mostly unintentional.

Some people do not want to watch pornography, for lots of different reasons including religious, social, and cultural or it does not do anything for them. It is important that no one feels under pressure to watch pornography or to enjoy it.

Prevalence of Pornography

X (formerly Twitter) is the platform where the highest percentage of children had seen pornography;

- 41% of young people reported having seen it on X.
- Dedicated pornography sites came next (37%),
- Instagram (33%)
- Snapchat (32%)
- Search engines (30%)

Many young people seek out pornography online. Half (50%) of survey respondents, 58% of boys and 42% of girls, aged 16-21 said that they sought out online pornography themselves.

In 2020, the four largest online pornography sites – PornHub, XVideos, xnxx and XHamster – received a combined 11 billion visits a month. This is greater than the number of monthly visits to Amazon, LinkedIn, Netflix, Zoom and eBay combined. During the pandemic Pornhub alone had a bigger audience than the BBC News, Sky One and ITV4.

Estimates of the pornography industry value range from a conservative estimate of $15bn up to a staggering $97bn per year. This would make the industry larger than Netflix ($11.7bn) and perhaps even larger than Hollywood film industry as a whole ($42.5bn).

Site	Monthly Visits (202.)	Estimated Annual Visits (2020)
xvideos.com	3.4 billion	40.8 billion
pornhub.com	3.3 billion	39.6 billion
xnxx.com	2.9 billion	34.8 billion
xhamster.com	1.2 billion	14.4 billion

Pornography has changed over the past 20 years. Previously pornography was available in magazines and videos, through the increase in smartphone ownership and internet access online pornography is completely different.

There are lots of categories for people to choose from, some people will choose a different kind of porn to what they like in real like when they are with a sexual partner(s) e.g. someone who identifies as heterosexual may enjoy watching LGBTQ+ pornography or vice versa. Some people may enjoy watching a certain type of sexual act but would not want to try it in real life. It is normal for people to enjoy things in porn that they wouldn't when they have sex - a person's porn use and likes does not define their sexuality.

Several studies have sought to quantify the prevalence of sexual violence content on mainstream pornography sites. One study (Fritz et al, 2020) found that from over 4,000 scenes on two pornography sites (Pornhub and XVideos), 45% of scenes included at least one act of aggression, whilst on XVideos 35% of scenes contained aggression. In 97% of these scenes, the target of aggression was towards women and the responses to this aggression was mostly neutral or positive, and rarely negative. This has the potential to have an impact on how young people see gender stereotypes within a sexual relationship.

Another study in 2021 of 132,000 titles found that 1 in 8 titles shown to a first-time visitor on mainstream porn sites described sexual violence as outlined by the World Health Organisation.

ANY SEXUAL ACT, ATTEMPT TO OBTAIN A SEXUAL ACT, OR OTHER ACT DIRECTED AGAINST A PERSON'S SEXUALITY USING COERCION, BY ANY PERSON REGARDLESS OF THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO THE VICTIM, IN ANY SETTING. IT INCLUDES RAPE, DEFINED AS THE PHYSICALLY FORCED OR OTHERWISE COERCED PENETRATION OF THE VULVA OR ANUS WITH A PENIS, OTHER BODY PART OR OBJECT.

Sexually Violent Pornography

There is a significant amount of interest in teenage girls found in online pornography. An analysis of 172 PornHub videos by Shor (2019) found that teenage performers were more likely than adult performers to feature in titles that suggest aggression, and to be the recipient of anal penetration and facial ejaculation. Shor's research further found that teenage performers were more likely than adult performers to act as if experiencing 'pleasure' following sexual aggression, thus showing the aggression and male dominance as 'consensual' and 'sensual'. This gives the perception to the viewer that sexual assault is welcomed.

> PORN IS OFTEN THE STARTING POINT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE WHEN IT COMES TO SEX, HOW TO HAVE SEX, AND WHAT TO EXPECT.
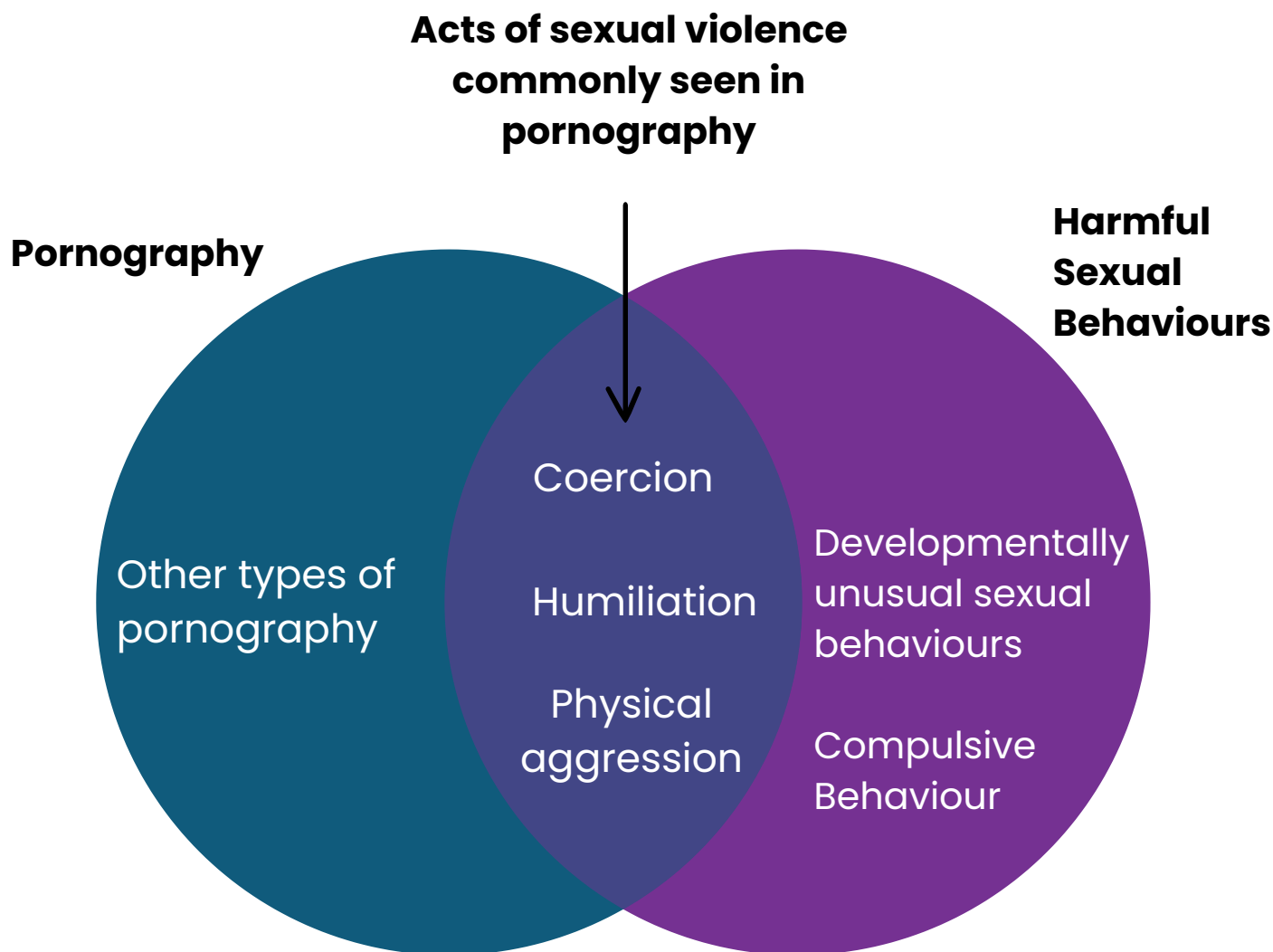> YOUNG MEN, 20, FIRST SAW PORNOGRAPHY AGED 10
> CHILDREN COMMISSIONER FOR ENGLAND (2023)

A report commissioned by the Government Equalities Office into the relationship between pornography use and harmful sexual behaviours in 2020 found that the majority of frontline workers spontaneously mentioned pornography as an influential factor for harmful sexual behaviours towards women and girls. All acknowledged it as a potential factor when it was later introduced into the discussion.

Many discussed a range of potentially harmful narratives played out in pornography that may act as a template for behaviour among high-risk individuals. Several Frontline Workers described how their clients had become desensitised to the sexual content they consumed online which led to an escalation in the kind of content sought out.

Pornography and Harmful Sexual Behaviour

Venn Diagram depicting the intersection of pornography, harmful sexual behaviour and acts of sexual violence commonly seen in pornography as outlined in The Children's Commissioner Report.

Acts of sexual violence commonly seen in pornography

Pornography

Harmful Sexual Behaviours

Other types of pornography

Coercion

Humiliation

Physical aggression

Developmentally unusual sexual behaviours

Compulsive Behaviour

Pornography is one factor that influences harmful sexual behaviour by children and young people. A Children's Commissioner report cites that in 50% of child sexual abuse, the associated interview transcripts include words referring to at least one specified act of sexual violence commonly seen in pornography. A manual review of 32 transcripts found instances of both police and children drawing direct links between the incident of abuse and the person who had caused harm's exposure to pornography.

Our Sexual Behaviours & PSHE Pack provides more information on this topic, including information on the Hackett Continuum and the local pathways for children and young people.

Why might porn be harmful?

It is important to recognise that the impact of pornography will be different to children and young people as it is to adults. Online pornography differs in how it is presented to young people — often supported by algorithmic targeting and persuasive design techniques. Research shows that online pornography can cause real harm and put young people's freedom to develop meaningful, intimate relationships at risk. These research findings include:

- Watching pornography can make real-world sex less enjoyable.
- Pornography can make people feel less happy in their relationships.
- Pornography can lead people to think about sex a lot more. This can make it harder for them to enjoy their friendships and other interests.
- Pornography can lead to people viewing others, especially women, as 'sex objects' and not as people with intelligence and feelings, meaning they are respected less.
- Over time, pornography can shape the types of things people are aroused by, and this may lead to an increased interest in extreme or violent pornography.

The Childen's Commissioner's Report "A lot of it is actually abuse" found that young people are frequently exposed to violent pornography, depicting coercive, degrading, or pain-inducing sex acts; **79% had encountered violent pornography before the age of 18.** Young people expressed concern about the implications of violent pornography on their understanding of the difference between sexual pleasure and harm. Indeed, the report found that frequent users of pornography are more likely to engage in physically aggressive sex acts.

Pornography and Gender

A <u>study</u> by Davis et al. (2018) found that:
- 70% of adolescents and young adults frequently saw men portrayed as dominant (compared to 17% frequently seeing women as dominant);
- 36% frequently saw women being called names or slurs (compared to 7% frequently seeing men treated this way);
- 35% frequently saw "consensual" violence towards women (compared to 9% frequently seeing this towards men);
- 11% frequently saw non-consensual violence towards women (compared to 1% frequently seeing this towards men).

When discussing pornography with young people it is vital to ensure that sessions are inclusive. In 2019 Google Analytics data showed that the audience for PornHub was 32% female.

Within pornography, there can be some harmful stereotypes in terms of gender, sexual orientation, and race. False stereotypes must be highlighted, this ensures that everyone feels included in the session and also helps young people to develop critical thinking skills.

Some common harmful stereotypes found in pornography include:
- The expectation that all women are submissive and men decide what happens in sex
- That porn showing sex between women is often highly stereotyped for a heterosexual male audience
- Porn can reproduce harmful stereotypes when it comes to the sexuality of people of colour.

Pornography and the Law

It is not illegal for children and young people under the age of 18 to watch pornography, but it is against the law to show anyone under the age of 18.

It is the responsibility of distributors (websites and shops) not to sell or show pornography to children and young people.

It is illegal for anyone under the age of 18 years to share explicit images or films of themselves or another young person, even if is shared with their permission.

Some types of pornography are illegal for people of any age - Extreme Pornography- These include porn that:

- Threatens a person's life or results in serious injury
- Shows violence such as rape or abuse
- Involves a sexual act with an animal (bestiality)
- Involves a sexual act with a human corpse (necrophilia)
- Involves anyone aged under 18 years

The penalties for extreme pornography vary depending on the classification of the image. For example, possession of extreme pornography showing bestiality and necrophilia can result in up to two years in prison and/or an unlimited fine. In cases of extreme pornography showing rape, serious injury, or threat to life the maximum sentence is up to three years in prison and/or an unlimited fine. When the person being prosecuted is over 18 and receives a sentence over two years they can also expect to be subject to register as a sex offender.

Cyberflashing

Cyberflashing refers to sending someone an explicit image without their consent.

Cyberflashing is sexual harassment, and whilst the person sending it may think it is funny, a joke or "banter" the person receiving it may feel intimidated, upset or find it creepy.

4 IN 10

Young women have reported being cyberflashed

26%

Of men aged 18-24 have also reported being cyberflashed

If someone is cyberflashed it is important for them to remember it is not their fault and they are not powerless.

They should block the sender, report it to the platform where it happened and then speak to a trusted adult and seek support.

Cyberflashing became an offence as part of the Online Safety Act in January 2024. This offence carries up to two years in prison, where it is done to gain sexual gratification or to cause alarm, distress or humiliation.

"Revenge" Porn

This has been a sexual offence since 2015. This term can be misleading as it implies the person has done something to deserve this treatment. This is not the case, a more accurate term would be non-consensual pornography or image-based sexual abuse.

This activity carries a sentence of up to two year's imprisonment.

The law defines it as distributing private explicit images without the consent of the person depicted, which is commonly done maliciously to shame ex-partners. Distribution refers to any form of sharing, whether online via social media or websites or offline via physical copies, and the material can either show a sexual activity or a person depicted in a sexual way or with their genitals exposed.

Research shows that females are disproportionately affected by revenge porn and the impacts of this criminal activity are highly gendered. Revenge Porn can also be carried out by hackers or criminal gangs who use sexually explicit content to financially blackmail victims (also termed 'sextortion'). This type of activity is more likely to be against males, in the first six months of 2023 reports of 'sextortion' had increased by 257% compared to the whole of 2022 according to the IWF. This type of criminal activity does affect children and young people.

Pornography and Body Image

Pornography can impact all genders' perceptions of body image. A <u>report</u> by the British Board of Film Classification found that 29% of 11-17 years old felt bad about their body when they saw how people looked in porn.

> Asking young people to draw a porn star can be a helpful activity to begin talking about stereotypes and body ideals

It is not only pornography itself that can impact a person's body image, but also the adverts found alongside. People will often see adverts for penis enlargement or getting a muscular body.

Whilst there are porn categories that feature bigger women (BBW), older women (MILG, GILF, or Mature), and amateur, there is more variety of a female porn actor than a male one. The porn and sexual images that sell the most tend to have similar-looking men and women.

Breasts - Many women in porn (and glamour modelling) tend to have bigger than average breasts - sometimes this is natural but people do have surgery to make them bigger.

Pubic Hair - Most porn actors and models either remove all of their pubic hair or trim it.

Vulvas - vulva's come in different shapes and sizes, this is often not truly reflected within pornography.

Penis Size - In porn most penises are bigger than average size, sometimes the actor will have a bigger penis, and other times they will use camera tricks, being slim also can make the penis look bigger and the lack of pubic hair means the full length of the penis is on show.

As pornography is often the only place where people can see different penises and vulvas people can often become concerned about if their genitals are "normal".

Like other parts of the body, penises and vulvas come in all different shapes, sizes, and colours.

The great wall of vagina is an art project that shows lots of examples of what a vulva can look like (they are made of plaster and don't have any colour or hair.

100 Vaginas in a project by photographer Laura Dodsworth

The Labia Library is a website created by Women's Health Victoria (Australia) that has a photo gallery to show how unique the labia is to each person.

It is common that people worry about the size of their penis, and feel self-conscious that it is too small. This is often due to the fact people over-estimate the average size of a penis.

During puberty, the penis and testicles will grow, they do not usually stop growing completely until around 21 years old. In general, the average adult penis size is usually about 13-18cm (5 to 7 inches) when erect. When flaccid (soft) the length of the penis can vary depending on many factors, including temperature.

Porn V Real Life

Pornography is created for entertainment - it is important to remember that the people in it are actors and the storyline and sex have been scripted and planned.

Educators to feel confident to help young people to recognise that sex in real life can be different from that featured in pornography.

In pornography, the men stay hard for ages.

Sometimes in porn, people with penises may struggle to get an erection - the stress of the lights, having people watching and a director instructing you on what to do all add to the stress. If this does happen then they might not get work again - so some people might take Viagra to stay hard.

Porn videos are often edited to make it look like the sex goes on for a long time without breaks or multiple sessions. A ten-minute clip will have taken hours to film.

Men always cum loads in pornography

Porn that features penises will put a lot of attention on the moment of ejaculation, it often happens visibly (on or over someone) and usually at the end of the scene.

People do not always orgasm or ejaculate when they have sex. Sometimes the ejaculation in pornography is faked (this is sometimes obvious but not always).

They always have an orgasm in pornography

Orgasms can be faked, particularly in pornography. Contrary to what porn might show only 20% of people with vaginas can orgasm from penetrative (penis in vagina) sex alone - most need clitoral stimulation. It's quite rare for two people to reach orgasm at the same time.

Orgasms can vary according to mood, where someone is in their menstrual cycle, sexual position, communication with a partner(s), and lots of other things. This means that the time to orgasm varies from person to person and might be different each time. On average it takes a person with a penis much less time than people with vaginas to have an orgasm.

The important thing to remember is that sex is about intimacy and pleasure and there are plenty of ways of having sex that do not centre around orgasms and ejaculation.

Sex is never messy or awkward in pornography

Sex in pornography is planned and scripted to make it appealing and easy to watch. Sex in real life is a lot less smooth and can be clumsy and awkward. There can be fumbling, laughing, breaks, body noises, and talking. They are all completely normal, whether it is someone's first time or their hundredth.

They never use lube in pornography

Just because the use of lubricant isn't always seen in pornography doesn't mean it isn't being used. Lubricants can add to the pleasure of penetrative sex by reducing friction.

> **She won't get pregnant if I pull out before I cum**

It is rare to see condoms feature in porn videos and often the "pull-out method" (withdrawal) will feature to capture ejaculation.

In pornography, it may seem like the actors are using the "pull-out method" as contraception but this isn't the case as it is not an effective way of preventing pregnancy.

Instead, they use different methods that aren't visible and they are regularly tested for Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) to make sure they are having safer sex.

If people are using a different method of contraception or if they are not having sex that could result in pregnancy they still need to use condoms to protect against STIs (see our Sexual Health & PSHE pack for more information on condoms).
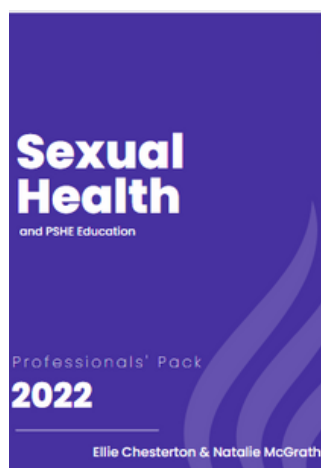
Click on the images above to access our <u>Sexual Health & PSHE</u> and <u>Consent & PSHE</u> Professional Packs for more information on these topics.

When does Porn become unhealthy?

Watching pornography and having an interest in sex can be healthy and natural. However, due to the ease at which pornography can be accessed and the variety of porn available, it can become unhealthy and have an impact on the person consuming the porn's self-esteem, relationships, sex life, and well-being.

As porn use is different for everyone, some people will not watch it at all, and others will watch it more or less than the next person. It's important not to focus on the amount or number of times that a person is viewing pornography but on how it is affecting their life and how they feel about it.

Some questions people can ask themselves about their porn consumption:
- Are they comparing their body and sexual performance to people in porn?
- Do they struggle to become aroused or enjoy intimacy with a sexual partner(s)?
- Are they seeking more and more extreme porn to turn them on?
- Are they copying things they have seen in porn without talking to their sexual partner(s) beforehand and during?
- Are they watching pornography that disgusts them or goes against what they think is morally right?
- Are they experiencing feelings of anxiety and shame?
- Is porn beginning to take over their thoughts or impacting the time they spend doing other things such as school, hobbies, and spending time with friends?
- Is porn affecting their expectations of sex with their sexual partner(s)?

If they answer yes to any of these it might be that they need to get help or limit their porn use. This can be a really positive and important step to take- even if the person has seen something illegal. The law is designed to protect and help young people, not to get them into trouble.

If someone is worried about the impact pornography is having on their life see our signposting information (page 64)

If people want to ensure that they use pornography in a safe, healthy, and age-appropriate way, here are some helpful things to consider:

- Talk to friends and sexual partner(s) about porn
- Avoid extreme porn - if someone finds themselves seeking more and more extreme porn to turn them on, it might be time to take a step back
- If someone usually masturbates with porn, try masturbating without it
- If they think porn is starting to impact on their life they could set up internet controls on their phone or computer to limit access to it

If someone is over 18 they can buy ethical porn. This is porn that is:

- Produced legally
- Provides safe working environments for the actors
- Respects and celebrates diversity
- Made with a female perspective and pleasure in mind
- Shows different types of sex

Sharing Nudes

Sharing nudes refers to sending sexual images to someone else. It can be a way of people flirting and engaging sexually with people digitally, they do not always have to intend to be physically sexual with the person.

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

If some aged under 18 send a nude or sexually explicit image it will be considered as Youth Produced Sexual Imagery (YPSI)

It is essential to remember that indecent images of children are a form of sexual abuse and should never be referred to as pornography. Terminology within the Police is changing from Indecent Images of Children to Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM). PSHE should prepare people for their future lives so it is important to talk about non-consensual pornography or image-based sexual abuse.

The government has created <u>non-statutory guidance</u> for education settings on responding to incidents and safeguarding children and young people.

Children and young people must be made aware that:

- Images sent on sites like Snapchat can still be saved and screenshotted
- It is not okay to pressure someone into sending a nude, neither it is okay for someone to pressure anyone else into sending a nude
- Sending or receiving a nude when under 18 is against the law
- Not everyone in a relationship will share nudes
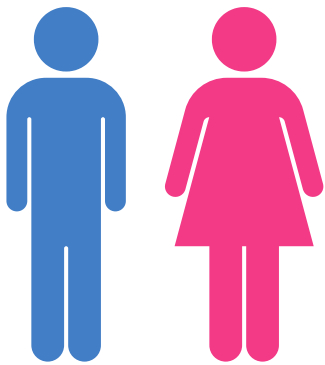- If something goes wrong, there's support to help
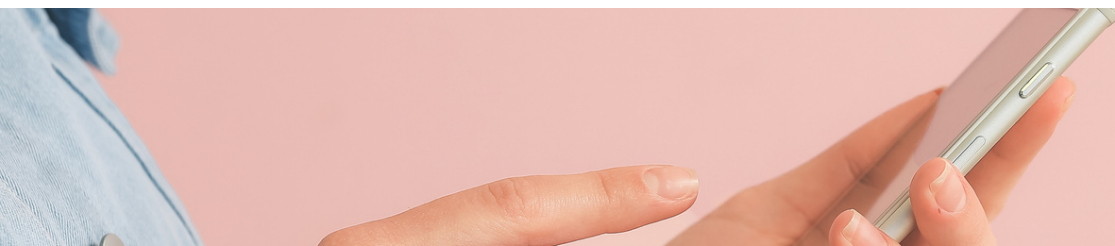
National Statistics

13 Average age at which young people first see pornography.

A significant minority of children access pornography at very young ages: 10% had seen it by age nine, 27% had seen it by age 11 and 50% of children had seen it by age 13

51% of girls aged 16-21 had been sent or shown explicit content involving someone they know in real-life, compared to 33% of boys.

30% of respondents learnt nothing at all about pornography, and a further 28% learnt 'some, but not enough' about the topic within their PSHE education

18% of sexually active over-16 said they had been asked to do or had done, things seen in porn
(BBFC, 2020)

30% of over 16's said real sex hadn't lived up to their expectations from watching porn, with 37% on the fence
(BBFC, 2020)

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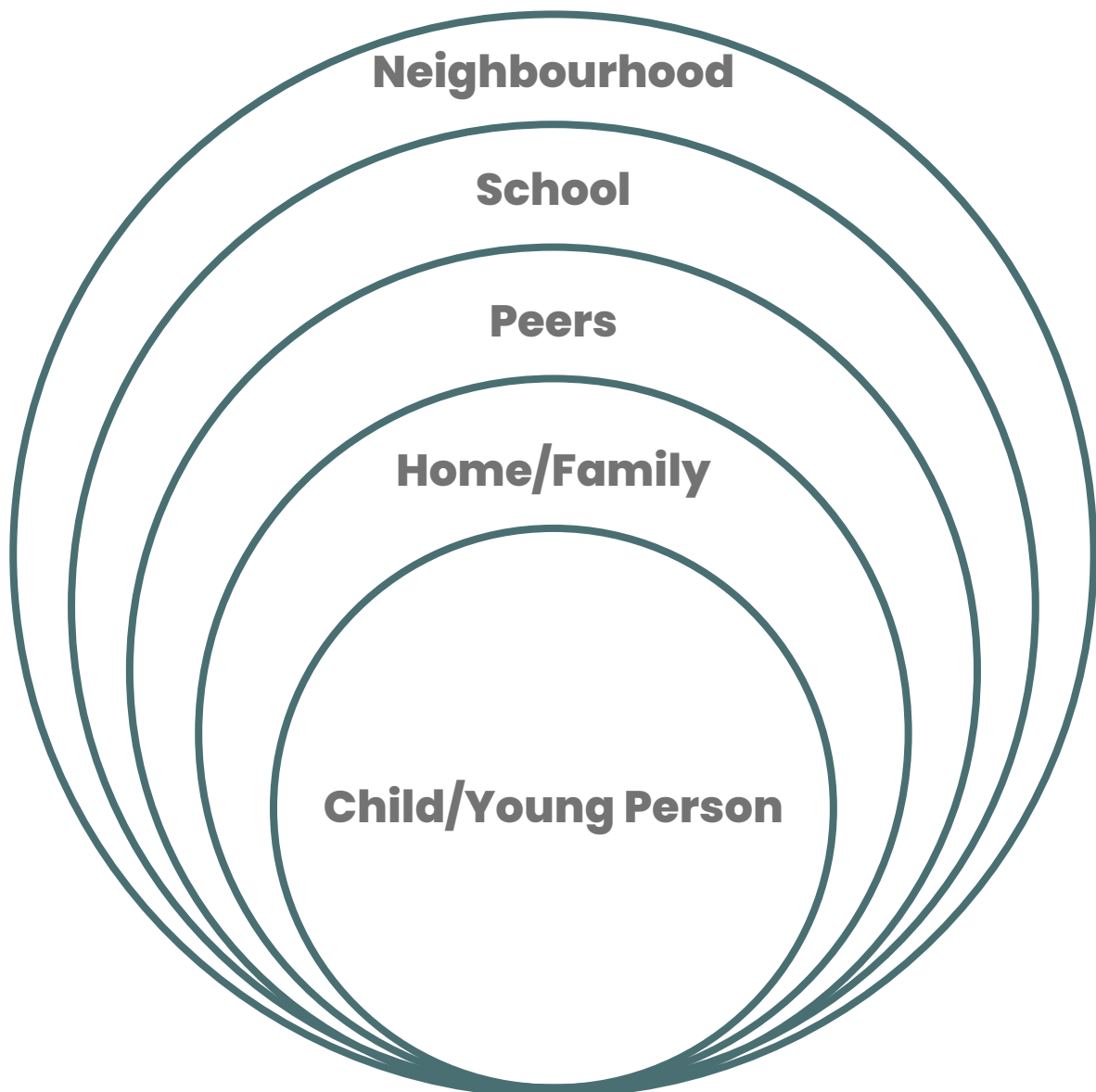
Signposting Information:
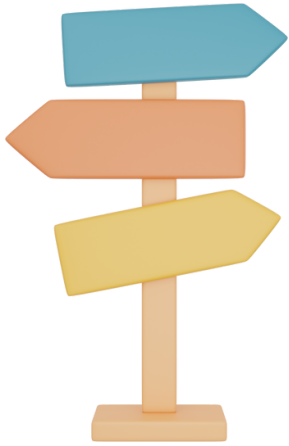
It is important to signpost children and young people to relevant local and national organisations who can provide further advice and support.

Local Services
- School Nursing Service

National Services
- Brook
- Childline
- Report Remove
- Revenge Porn Helpline (18+ years)
- Shore
- The Mix

Useful Contacts:

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
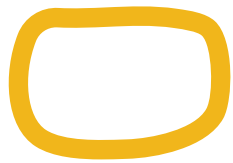Out of Hours - 01782 234 234

Further Reading:

- [Evidence on pornography's influence on harmful sexual behaviour among children](#)

- ["A lot of it is actually just abuse" Young People and Pornography](#)

- [Information Sheet: Pornography and Young People](#)

- [Pornography and Human Futures](#)

- [What is the Impact of Pornography on Young People](#)

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