

# Positive Relationships

liC Positive Relationships Project



Proudly supporting  
youth social action

#iwill



Investing in Children



## Introduction

Investing in Children (IiC) is a children's human rights organisation working in partnership with children and young people to exercise their rights and participate in decisions that affect them.

We support young people of all ages and living in all circumstances to help to shape local services in their communities.

The Positive Relationships Project came about following the staggering rise of domestic abuse during the Covid-19 pandemic. Young people working with Investing in Children felt that there wasn't enough information given to them and that the information should be introduced earlier to help prevent negative relationships, and raise awareness of positive relationships in an age appropriate manner.

This booklet has been co-produced with young people and all contents has been researched and edited by the young people involved. The themes that this booklet covers were identified as key topics that young people wish they had received more information on. The core audience is young people aged 13 and over but it may also be useful for parents, carers and professionals.

Our aim was to collect information about positive relationships in one place as an introduction to key topics to help you understand what a positive relationship is. You may wish to follow the links included in this resource to do further reading and research.

We hope that this booklet helps you, a friend or a loved one.

# A Note on Relationships

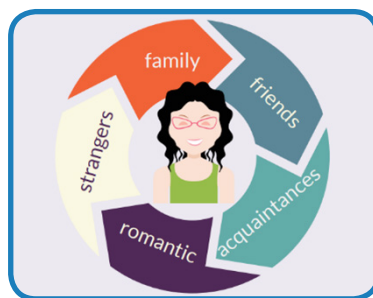
When we think of the word relationship, often we think of a romantic partner. But a relationship isn't just about romance.

**You can have a relationship with:**

- **Your parents- maternal, paternal and parental love**
- **Your friends- friendship and platonic love**
- **Your siblings- platonic and family love**
- **Your family- platonic and family love**
- **A partner- romantic love**
- **Yourself- self worth**

Everyone deserves love, no matter what type it is, and we hope that this booklet will help you understand what a positive relationship is. The information will cover difficult topics like abuse and exploitation.

If any of this causes you concern for yourself or someone you know, please see pages 21-23 for a list of useful contacts and links and always speak to a trusted adult if you need more support.



## Top Tips

If you don't read anything else, read this page!

### Know the law and your rights

- The law states that you have to be 16 to consent to sex.
- From 13 you are able to get free condoms and safe sex information.
- You have a right to say NO to anything you don't consent to.

### Talk, report, support

- Talk to someone that you trust, be brave.
- Report anything that isn't right, be fearless.
- Support yourself and others in hard situations, be kind!

### Know the signs

- Know what abuse is to help stop the cycle
- Encourage open conversation and stop the stigma
- Check out Alice Ruggles' story!

### Stay safe out and about

- Ask for Angela in pubs and bar
- Ask for Ani at your local pharmacy
- #SignalForHelp

### Make time for you

- Keep yourself mentally well
- Know you're worth it and you have a choice!
- It's ok to take time out for you.

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## Your rights:

It is your right to live a safe and happy life. There are number of laws, campaigns and schemes that have been set up to help protect and promote your rights when it comes to relationships.

**Clare's law:** The Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS), also known as "Clare's Law" enables the police to disclose information to a victim or potential victim of domestic abuse about their partner's or ex-partner's previous abusive or violent offending. More info can be found at [www.myharbour.org.uk/images/downloads/Clares\\_Law\\_Leaflet\\_Durham.pdf](http://www.myharbour.org.uk/images/downloads/Clares_Law_Leaflet_Durham.pdf)

**Alice Ruggles:** The Alice Ruggles Trust exists in order to raise awareness of stalking. Alice Ruggles was murdered in 2016 after being relentlessly stalked by an ex-boyfriend. More info can be found at [www.alicerugglestrust.org/](http://www.alicerugglestrust.org/)

**Sarah's law:** Otherwise known as 'the child sex offenders disclosure scheme' allows anyone who has access to a child to ask the police to disclose information if they have a child sexual offence record this enables parents and carers to make decisions around their child's safety and welfare. More info can be found at <https://beta.northumbria.police.uk/advice-and-info/personal-safety/sarah-s-law-child-sex-offender-disclosure-scheme/>

**Ask for Ani:** The Government has launched the Ask for Ani (Action Needed Immediately) codeword scheme to enable victims of domestic abuse to access immediate help from the police, or other support services, from the safety of their local pharmacy. More info can be found at [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/940379/Training\\_information\\_-\\_Ask\\_for\\_ANI.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/940379/Training_information_-_Ask_for_ANI.pdf)

**Ask for Angela:** People who 'Ask for Angela' may feel unsafe, vulnerable or threatened and they can seek help by approaching bar, pub, restaurant or café staff. This will indicate to the staff that they require help with their situation. More info can be found at [www.met.police.uk/AskforAngela](http://www.met.police.uk/AskforAngela)

# What is a healthy and an unhealthy relationship?

Relationships consist of many things, here are some healthy and unhealthy behaviours. Most relationships will have a combination of both, and that is ok. However, you should never feel like you have to stay in a relationship where unhealthy behaviours make you feel unsafe

## Healthy:

- Have fun together
- Enjoy personal time and spending time apart with others
- Feel safe together
- Trust each other
- Are faithful
- Support each other's goals and aspirations
- Respect each other's opinions, even when they are different (unless the opinion is offensive)
- Solving conflicts without putting each other down
- Both accept responsibility for your actions
- Both apologise when you are wrong
- Have equal chances to make decisions
- Are proud to be with each other
- Encourage each other's interests
- Have privacy with your belongings- like your phone
- Never feel like your pressured to do something you don't want to do
- Having healthy and open conversations about sex (especially in romantic relationships)
- Allow each other space when you need
- Always treat each other with respect

## Unhealthy:

- Gets jealous easily
- Putting you down by name-calling, cursing or making you feel bad.
- Yells and treats you as if you are below them
- Doesn't take you or important things to you seriously
- Doesn't listen and talks over you
- Frequently criticises others that are important to you
- Pressures you into doing something they don't want to do
- Threatens to hurt themselves or commit suicide if you leave
- Cheats or threatens to cheat
- Tells you how to act or dress and who to hang around with
- Blames you for their behaviour- "you made me do it."
- Embarrasses or humiliates others
- Smashes, throws or destroys things
- Tries to keep you from bettering yourself
- Makes all the decisions on what you do together
- Tries to make you feel crazy or plays mind games (gaslighting)
- Breaks promises frequently
- Acts controlling or possessive
- Uses alcohol or drugs as an excuse for bad behaviour
- Uses mental health/conditions as an excuse for bad behaviour
- Ignores or withholds affection as punishment
- Depends completely on you to meet social or emotional needs

**Sometimes unhealthy behaviours in relationships can turn into abuse. Read on to find out more.**



# What is Abuse?

It is important to understand that there are different types of abuse, and there will be similarities in what an unhealthy relationship looks like.

Abuse is a pattern of behaviours that can negatively affect someone's mental health, safety and security and other relationships. Abusers can use coercive and controlling behaviours to get what they want.

## **Controlling behaviour:**

- Acts to make someone lower or dependent on them
- Will isolate from sources of support
- Exploits resources and good gestures for personal gain (selfishness)
- Deprives someone of their independence
- And controls everyday behaviour.

## **Coercive behaviour is:**

- An act or pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation
- Using other forms of abuse that harm, punish or frighten their victim.

[www.cps.gov.uk/legal-guidance/controlling-or-coercive-behaviour-intimate-or-family-relationship](http://www.cps.gov.uk/legal-guidance/controlling-or-coercive-behaviour-intimate-or-family-relationship)

**Abuse can happen to anyone. This doesn't mean you've done anything wrong or that you deserve it.**

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There are different types of abuse which can all overlap:

- **Psychological**
- **Physical**
- **Sexual**
- **Financial**
- **Emotional**

**Psychological** Abuse is manipulative and abusive behaviour that affects the way you think and act. Gaslighting is a form of psychological abuse where you are left doubting reality or what really happened.

**Physical** Abuse is behaviour that is meant to cause harm physically and well as controlling a person's physical freedom or movement. This could be the abuser using their physical strength, weapons or using their size and presence to intimidate and control.

**Sexual** Abuse is any behaviour considered sexual that is forced or manipulative, this can include making you watch things as well as do things you don't want to. This includes sexual harassment. It can also overlap with other forms of abuse mentioned.

**Financial** Abuse is controlling behaviour that revolves around finances. This could be controlling your money and telling you how to use it, and even withholding money from you.

**Emotional** Abuse is a way of hurting someone without being physical. It's when someone is being controlling while using someone's feelings or thoughts to gain power over them. An example could be someone that calls you names or mocks you.

Abuse not only affects the person being abused but also those around them. For example, it is harmful for children to witness abuse in their parent/carers' relationship, even if they are in a different room.

If you or anyone that you know is experiencing abuse, be sure to tell an adult you trust.

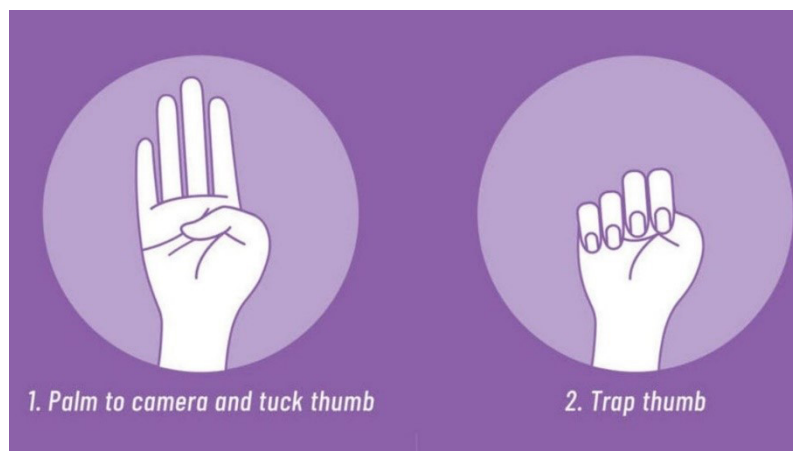
Sometimes it can be difficult for people that are being abused to be able to communicate with others and to be in a safe space where they are able to open up.

To help someone who is being physically abused you can often see signs of abuse like bruises in unusual places, the person may make excuses for these injuries. Also, a person may be very stand-offish and they may have very little time for others or they have to go very quickly.

If you notice these signs, it is important to support the person who is being abused if it is safe for you to do so.

If someone tells you they are being abused, listen to them and take everything they say seriously. Even if someone asks you to keep it a secret, if you feel like this person's safety is at risk or someone else is in danger, then you should always tell a trusted adult who can help. This is known as breaking confidentiality.

Something you can do to communicate that you are in danger without using any words is this hand signal:



#SignalForHelp

[www.womensfundingnetwork.org/signalforhelp/](http://www.womensfundingnetwork.org/signalforhelp/)

## Consent

Consent is defined as giving permission or agreeing to do something. The law around sexual consent says “a person that agrees by choice and has the freedom and capacity to make that choice.”

[www.brook.org.uk/your-life/sex-and-consent/](http://www.brook.org.uk/your-life/sex-and-consent/)

In the eyes of the law you are of consensual age at 16. This means that it is considered a criminal offence or even sexual assault if you have sex with someone when they are under the age of 16, even if you have both given consent. In the eyes of the law you are unable to consent to sex under the age of 16. However, this law is meant to protect young people from harm and abuse, it is not meant to criminalise two young people under 16 of a similar age who are having consensual sex.

To understand what consent is and how it works watch the Tea Video which you can watch on YouTube via this link:

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=pZwvrxVavnQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pZwvrxVavnQ)



**CONSENT**  
IT'S SIMPLE AS TEA

## Grooming & Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

Grooming is a complicated topic. Grooming is a behaviour abusers will use in a range of relationships. Grooming is when someone builds a relationship, trust and an emotional connection with a person so they can manipulate, exploit and even abuse them.

Someone can be groomed online or in person, by a stranger or even by someone that you know. The process can take hours, days, weeks, months even years and someone can even try to establish a relationship with the people around you so they appear trustworthy and safe. Groomers can be of any age, gender, race or sexuality. If the grooming takes place online, a groomer may pretend to be someone else to gain trust more easily.

### Common tactics of gaining trust can be:

- Giving you attention and compliments
- Giving you advice
- Listening to and saying they understand your worries
- Buying you gifts and taking you on trips
- May tell you “secrets” and ask you not to tell you about your relationship with them

### Once they have someone’s trust, they may try to:

- Isolate you from others
- Tell you that everyone around you are the toxic ones and they are the only ones that are trustworthy
- Threaten you if you try to leave the relationship that you have with them

Grooming can develop into CSE. It is considered CSE if the abuser is giving their victim something in return for sex such as alcohol, drugs and money as “payment”.

Victims of CSE are never at fault. Sexual acts can appear as consensual; however, this is not the case and it is abuse.

Some potential warning signs that can be seen in someone experiencing grooming and CSE are highlighted in the following links:

**[www.nspcc.org.uk/what-is-child-abuse/types-of-abuse/child-sexual-exploitation/](http://www.nspcc.org.uk/what-is-child-abuse/types-of-abuse/child-sexual-exploitation/)**

**[www.knowaboutcse.co.uk/youngpeople/](http://www.knowaboutcse.co.uk/youngpeople/)**

If you are worried that you or someone else is a victim of CSE or grooming, you should report this to a trusted adult or you can make an anonymous report on Fearless, or Crime Stoppers.

# Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is any form of unwanted sexual attention. This can make someone feel threatened, uncomfortable and unsafe. There are three forms of sexual harassment:

## Physical:

- Unwanted touching or grabbing of intimate areas like the bum, waist, thigh, chest or genitalia
- Any unwanted touching that makes you feel uncomfortable or touching that doesn't seem innocent
- Kissing someone without consent

## Verbal:

- Pressure or constantly asking to go out together
- Comments about someone that makes them feel uncomfortable
- Making jokes of a sexual nature and/or sexist- may not be direct but purposefully said so a person overhears
- Spreading sexual rumours about someone
- Threatening/blackmailing to share images that were meant to be private and/or demanding for images (if you have sent pictures like this you can get further advice and information about this in our useful links page)
- Unwanted notes or letters containing sexual content
- Sexual and inappropriate noises and wolf whistling
- Inappropriate prank phone calls

## Non-verbal:

- Sending content that makes a person uncomfortable
- Staring at someone that makes them uncomfortable
- Making gestures or expressions that are considered to be of a sexual nature.

**If you experience any of these it is really important that you mention this to someone that you trust that can help you.**

# **Sending Nudes and Sexting**

Sexting is when you send someone else a sexual message, photo or video. Sometimes people send pictures and videos of other people.

These messages could be to anyone such as a friend, boyfriend, girlfriend or someone online.

## **What can sexting include?**

- Being partially or fully naked or in your underwear.
- Posing in a sexual position.
- Sending nude photographs for example 'dick pics'.
- Talking about sexual things you are doing or are want to do.
- Doing sexual things on a live stream.

## **There are things that you can do if you have sent a nude and regret it:**

- You can ask for them to delete the message
- Don't reply to someone who is threatening you.
- Talk to someone who you can trust for support.
- Use Report Remove to get it removed from the internet.
- Report what has happened to CEOP (if Under 18).

Revenge porn is when someone posts or shares private images that are considered pornographic without a person's consent. It is a crime. If this happens to you, you can contact the police and should tell someone that you trust.

## **You can find help and support here:**

[www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/bullying-abuse-safety/online-mobile-safety/sexting/](http://www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/bullying-abuse-safety/online-mobile-safety/sexting/)

[www.swgfl.org.uk/assets/documents/so-you-got-naked-online.pdf](http://www.swgfl.org.uk/assets/documents/so-you-got-naked-online.pdf)



# Peer Pressure

Peer pressure is something that a lot of young people experience and even a lot of adults can experience peer pressure. Peer pressure comes in multiple forms and in all sorts of circumstances. It is described as pressure and influence to behave in a certain way because of expectations of your peers (friends), even if you don't really want to.

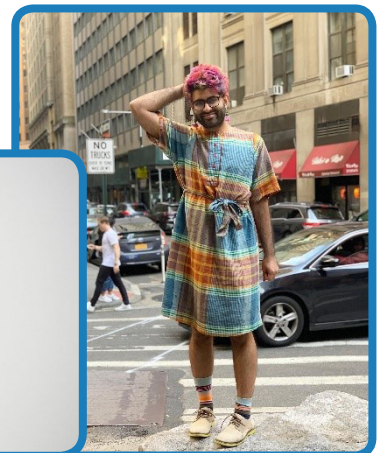
## A few examples of things you might feel peer pressure to do could be:

- Drinking alcohol, taking drugs or smoking
- Having sex
- Dressing in the current fashion or a certain way
- Stealing and shop-lifting
- Staying out later than you should
- Vandalising
- Bullying others
- Skipping school
- Getting into fights

The list can go on. You should remember to be able to make your own decisions on your own terms.

Remember to be confident in yourself and that your uniqueness and difference is what makes you special.

If you feel like you have been pressured in any way, be sure to talk to someone that you trust. If you are being pressured into doing something illegal or dangerous tell a trustworthy adult who can help.



## Age gaps and relationships

Age gaps in romantic relationships are quite common and you may know someone who has a partner of a different age. This is ok normally, however the law says that the age of consent is 16 for a sexual relationship.

This means that legally you can enter a consensual relationship with someone who is also 16 and older. But if a person is 18 and over and is in a position of trust such as a teacher, social worker or doctor, it is an offence if they enter a relationship with someone under the age of 18. If you are under the care of these professionals, it is also a breach of their job contract to have a relationship with their client.

What if you're 15 and the other is 16 then? By law in the UK this is still illegal. Even if it is a consensual relationship engaging in any type of sexual activity is an offence and the person who is 16 could get into trouble.

Age in relationships is also a moral choice. We must abide by the law but if you are 16 and are engaging in a relationship with someone who is 5-10 years older than you, people may not be comfortable with this and it can affect other relationships that you have.

For more advice and information please look at Childline's website on relationships.

[www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/friends-relationships-sex/sex-relationships/relationships/](http://www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/friends-relationships-sex/sex-relationships/relationships/)

## Positives and self-worth

Self-love is very important, and you looking after yourself should be one of your first priorities.

Building a positive relationship with yourself can be difficult, but not impossible. After all the information in this booklet, one of the best ways to tackle and fight against everything is to have self-love.

So how do you love yourself?

**Loving yourself is all about:**

- Confidence in yourself and your abilities
- Believing in yourself and your abilities
- Looking after yourself physically, mentally and emotionally
- Knowing and learning your own boundaries
- Knowing and learning what is right and wrong for you

Each point is vital in your growth and understanding as a person, and also important on being able to keep you safe and healthy. Some ways that you can build on these points is through something called affirmations.

Affirmations are quotes or sayings that you can tell yourself daily to boost your confidence.

**For example:**

- I am worth it
- I am strong and powerful and I can do anything I put my mind too
- I am smart, kind and beautiful
- I am enough

You can find more affirmations on the internet and also you can work together with friends and people you trust to help you. Try to create some of your own and write them down in a safe place so you can look back at them if you're struggling on some days.

Another good way of being able to love yourself can be by creating a mind-map or a poster all about you. Put yourself in the middle (a drawing or just write your name) and then you can include things like:

- What you like and dislike
- What your aspirations and goals are
- Your personal qualities
- Things you would like to get better at or would like to change
- The people in your life that are important to you (even your pets)
- The people you can go to and trust with difficult topics
- Your hobbies and what you are good at
- What makes you feel better after a hard day?
- Advice you give your friends that you can use yourself

You can use this poster to keep for yourself as a reminder of how unique and important you are. You can work with friends and people you trust to help you create the poster. This poster will be all yours and there won't be anyone else's like yours. You can write everything down or you can use pictures.

It is important to find things that you enjoy doing on your own or with people, and it's important to do those things regularly.

### Remember to:

- Take breaks when you need too
- Do something that you enjoy
- Do something that benefits you
- Take time to do things that are important to you

You are constantly learning and there is always enough time for you to work on the things that are important to you.

## For more information on the topics covered:

- [www.kooth.com/](http://www.kooth.com/) - Online national counselling service.
- [www.stem4.org.uk/](http://www.stem4.org.uk/) Supporting positive mental health in teenagers.
- [www.brook.org.uk/topics/relationships/](http://www.brook.org.uk/topics/relationships/)  
Sexual health and wellbeing advice and services.
- [www.relate.org.uk/](http://www.relate.org.uk/) relationship support for everyone.
- [www.eraseabuse.org/Pages/Home.aspx](http://www.eraseabuse.org/Pages/Home.aspx) - Information about educating and raise awareness of sexual health exploitation and keeping children and young p[people safe.
- [www.disrespectnobody.co.uk/](http://www.disrespectnobody.co.uk/)  
Find out about healthy relationships, relationship abuse, consent and more. Relationship information
- [www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/support-for-parents/pants-underwear-rule/](http://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/support-for-parents/pants-underwear-rule/) - The Underwear Rule | NSPCC  
Advice about keeping safe – personal space is your space.
- [www.itsnotokay.co.uk/children/](http://www.itsnotokay.co.uk/children/) - Children & Young People  
Great website about keeping everyone safe from exploitation.
- [www.childnet.com/resources/step-up-speak-up/](http://www.childnet.com/resources/step-up-speak-up/)  
Information to raise awareness of online sexual harassment amongst young people aged 13-17 and increase reporting.
- [www.thehotline.org/resources/healthy-relationships/](http://www.thehotline.org/resources/healthy-relationships/)  
Lots of advice and dedicated support for anyone in a bad relationship. Along with understanding different types of relationships
- [www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/friends-relationships-sex/sex-relationships/relationships/](http://www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/friends-relationships-sex/sex-relationships/relationships/) – Loads of advice, support and free phone numbers for young people.

**CLICK THE LINKS  
ABOVE**



## For help and advice, please see the list of services below:

### **The Police:**

Domestic abuse (in any of its forms) is a crime, so the police can always be contacted, especially if you feel unsafe.

**Call 999** for emergency situations.

**Call 101** when you're not in immediate danger. This can still be called 24/7.

Website for Durham police force:

[www.durham.police.uk/](http://www.durham.police.uk/)

[www.crimestoppers-uk.org/](http://www.crimestoppers-uk.org/)

[www.fearless.org/](http://www.fearless.org/)

[www.victimsupport.org.uk/](http://www.victimsupport.org.uk/)

**The CEOP (Child Exploitation and Online Protection Command)** is a law enforcement agency, that aims to protect children and young people from sexual exploitation and abuse. You can make a report about online via their **website:**

[www.ceop.police.uk/Safety-Centre/](http://www.ceop.police.uk/Safety-Centre/)

### **LOCAL SERVICES:**

**Harbour:** a local charity based in Hartlepool that offers support to victims of domestic abuse.

**Tel: 03000 20 25 25 (24 hrs)**

**Email: [info@myharbour.org.uk](mailto:info@myharbour.org.uk)**

**Website: [www.myharbour.org.uk/](http://www.myharbour.org.uk/)**

### **The Meadows -**

**Sexual Assault Referral Centre:** a service in County Durham offering a range of support to anyone who has been the victim of sexual assault and rape.

**Tel: 0191 3729 202**

**(Mon-Fri office hours)**

**or 03333 448 283 (24hrs crisis line)**

**Website:**

[www.themeadowsdurham.org.uk](http://www.themeadowsdurham.org.uk)

**One-point hubs:** offers support to young people and families from early pregnancy up until 19 years of age. Offer advice and practical help across all aspects of family life. Find your closest one point hub on the Durham gov website.

**Tel: 03000 261 111**

**Website:**

[www.durham.gov.uk/onepointhubs](http://www.durham.gov.uk/onepointhubs)

### **NATIONAL HELPLINES:**

**Childline:** can be contacted free 24/7, young people can always talk to someone if they are worried about anything. You can call or message through the website, it's confidential and you can report anonymously.

**Tel: 0800 1111**

**Website: [www.childline.org.uk/](http://www.childline.org.uk/)**

**The National Domestic Abuse Helpline** can be called for free 24/7.  
**Tel: 0808 2000 247**

Online live chat: Mon-Fri 3pm-10pm

**Website:**

**[www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk/](http://www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk/)**

**Women's Aid** – a national charity that offers support to women and children that have been affected by domestic abuse.

**Online live chat:**

Mon-Sun 10am-6pm

**Email:**[helpline@womensaid.org.uk](mailto:helpline@womensaid.org.uk)

**Website:** [www.womensaid.org.uk/](http://www.womensaid.org.uk/)

**SurvivorsUK** – a national charity that offers support to male victims of sexual assault and rape. They have an online chat helpline you can access 12pm – 8pm Monday to Sunday and can be contacted outside of these hours too by phone and email.

**Tel: 0203 598 3898**

**Email:** [help@survivorsuk.org](mailto:help@survivorsuk.org)

**Website:**[www.survivorsuk.org/](http://www.survivorsuk.org/)

**Respect** – a national charity that works with male domestic abuse victims, as well as perpetrators.

**Men's Advice Line** (for male victims of abuse): **0808 801 0327** (Mon–Fri 9am-8pm)

**E:** [info@mensadvice.org.uk](mailto:info@mensadvice.org.uk)  
(Mon–Fri 9am-8pm; Sat & Sun 10am-12pm & 4pm-6pm)

**Respect Phone Line** (for perpetrators): **0808 802 4040**  
(Mon–Fri 9am-8pm)

**E:** [info@respectphoneline.org.uk](mailto:info@respectphoneline.org.uk)  
(Mon–Fri 9am-8pm; Sat & Sun 10am-12pm & 4pm-6pm)

**Website:** [www.respect.uk.net/](http://www.respect.uk.net/)

**The information and links included in this booklet were correct and accessible when published in April 2022**

## SPECIAL THANKS TO:

All the young people that have come together to discuss the topic of positive relationships and helped to co-produce this booklet. Along with all the young people and partner projects that participated in the workshops on positive relationships.

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