

# TEACHER GUIDANCE: Something's Not Right

This guidance accompanies three lessons that are part of the new campaign from the Home Office 'Something's Not Right'. One lesson is designed for each secondary key stage (key stages 3, 4 and 5) on making disclosures about abuse. The lessons focus on recognising abuse, where young people can go for help, and overcoming barriers to reporting. Supporting students to speak to a trusted adult, and report concerns, is more important than ever, with young people having experienced a range of challenges at home during the recent coronavirus pandemic and resulting lockdown restrictions. These lessons therefore support schools in their recovery approach to this academic year (2020-21).

Please read and consider this guidance first, before delivering the lessons.

## Preparing to teach

### Why teach about reporting abuse?

The purpose of PSHE education is to equip students to live safe, healthy and happy lives. PSHE education is preventative; aiming to support young people to make healthy choices and stay safe before incidents occur. However, PSHE education also has a crucial role to play in supporting students to seek help when they need it, and to encourage them to speak to trusted adults if they have seen or experienced something which has upset or worried them. We want to support young people to make disclosures when appropriate; helping them to recognise who they can talk to, when they might need to seek help for themselves and others, and the value of seeking support from trusted adults.

All schools have a duty to safeguard the young people in their care, and the statutory safeguarding guidance [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#) specifies that "*Governing bodies and proprietors should ensure that children are taught about safeguarding, including online safety.*"<sup>[1]</sup> As part of a comprehensive PSHE education programme, these lessons support schools to meet this responsibility.

### Creating a safe learning environment

A safe learning environment helps students feel comfortable with sharing their ideas, without attracting negative feedback, and avoids possible distress and disclosures in a public setting. It also helps you to manage discussions on sensitive issues confidently. This is essential in all PSHE education lessons but particularly important when exploring a topic such as abuse. It is good practice to:

- work with students to establish ground rules about how they will behave in PSHE education lessons, such as;
  - o Everyone has the right to be heard and respected.
  - o We won't share our own, or anyone else's, personal experiences in the lesson.
  - o We will use language that won't offend or upset other people.
  - o We will use the correct terms, and if we don't know them, we'll ask the teacher.
  - o We will comment on what was said, not the person who said it.
  - o We won't put anyone on the spot and we have a right to pass.
  - o We won't judge or make assumptions about anyone.
- be sensitive to the needs and experiences of individuals – some students may have direct experience of some of the issues
- distance the learning from students to discourage personal disclosures in the classroom and to keep the learning environment safe
- offer opportunities for students to discuss issues in small groups as well as sharing views with the class
- make boxes available in which students can place anonymous questions or concerns, to avoid having to voice them in front of the class
- always work within the school's policies on safeguarding, child protection and confidentiality. Make sure you are familiar with the school's reporting protocol and confident in how to respond to a student disclosure, should they choose to speak to you following this lesson
- make students aware of sources of support, both inside and outside the school
- link PSHE education into the whole school approach to supporting student welfare.

Ensure that victim-blaming language or attitudes are challenged. For further guidance please [visit CEOP](#).

Further guidance on creating a safe learning environment is available from the [PSHE Association](#).

### **Links to PSHE Association programme of study and statutory guidance**

Each of the three core themes of the [PSHE Association programme of study](#) contains suggested learning opportunities which provide the context through which students can develop knowledge, skills and attributes. The learning opportunities should be used flexibly according to students' development, readiness and needs, and taking account of prior learning, experience and understanding. These lessons should be taught within the context of a wider PSHE education curriculum and would be most effective embedded within teaching about healthy and unhealthy relationships, consent and keeping safe.

The table on the next page shows the learning opportunities from the relevant PSHE education core themes at key stage 3, 4 and 5 which are met by these lessons. It also highlights where elements from the Department for Education's statutory guidance for relationships and sex education are achieved through the lesson content.

Lesson and learning objective	PSHE Association Programme of Study Learning opportunities	Department for Education Statutory Guidance
<p><b>Key stage 3 lesson: Making disclosures</b></p> <p>To learn about why, when and how to seek help from a trusted adult, or report inappropriate behaviour</p>	<p><b>R23.</b> the services available to support healthy relationships and manage unhealthy relationships, and how to access them</p> <p><b>R37.</b> 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</p>	<p>Pupils should know:</p> <p><u>Relationships and sex education</u></p> <p>Topic: Respectful relationships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the characteristics of positive and healthy friendships (in all contexts, including online) including: trust, respect, honesty, kindness, generosity, boundaries, privacy, consent and the management of conflict, reconciliation and ending relationships. This includes different (non-sexual) types of relationship</li> </ul>
<p><b>Key stage 4 lesson: Reporting abuse</b></p> <p>To develop confidence in reporting abuse and seeking support from trusted adults</p>	<p><b>R17.</b> ways to access information and support for relationships including those experiencing difficulties</p> <p><b>R29.</b> the law relating to abuse in relationships, including coercive control and online harassment</p> <p><b>R30.</b> to recognise when a relationship is abusive and strategies to manage this</p>	<p>Topic: Being safe</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the concepts of, and laws relating to, sexual consent, sexual exploitation, abuse, grooming, coercion, harassment, rape, domestic abuse, forced marriage, honour-based violence and FGM, and how these can affect current and future relationships</li> </ul>
<p><b>Key stage 5: Confidently seeking support</b></p> <p>To confidently seek support for abusive situations including identifying most appropriate sources of support</p>	<p><b>R8.</b> to use constructive dialogue to support relationships and negotiate difficulties</p> <p><b>R20.</b> to recognise and manage different forms of abuse, sources of support and exit strategies for unhealthy relationship</p>	

## Safeguarding considerations

These lessons are designed to encourage students who have experienced difficult circumstances during the lockdown period of 2020 – including abuse in the home – to speak to a trusted adult or report to another suitable source of support.

Students must not be encouraged to disclose personal stories or concerns during the lesson, publicly in front of their peers. However, the lessons may lead to an increase in student disclosures shortly after the lesson, including immediately after teaching. It is therefore essential that teachers are fully equipped and feel confident to support students should a disclosure occur. The following guidance is provided to give additional support to teachers, but you should always follow your school's safeguarding and child protection protocols, and contact your Designated Safeguarding Lead if you have concerns about a student. All staff should also read Part one of Keeping children safe in education, which sets out what staff in schools and colleges should know and do. It explains their safeguarding responsibilities, what the various forms of abuse and neglect look like and what staff should do if they have concerns about safeguarding matters.

## Before teaching these lessons

- **Choose the right time:** Think about when might be most appropriate to teach this lesson, both in terms of what students have recently been learning, and when in the timetable their lesson falls. It is most appropriate if this lesson is incorporated into wider learning about healthy relationships, consent or keeping safe. Ideally, this lesson should be taught before break, lunch or the end of the day, so that you have time for any students at the end of the lesson who may wish to speak to you, without interruption. If this is not possible, tell students where they can find you at the next break or end of the day if they wish to discuss anything.
- **Consider students with known vulnerabilities:** You may be aware that there are students in your class who have reported incidents of abuse or who have experienced historic abuse. If this is the case, consider whether it is appropriate for them to take part in this lesson, or if they may be re-traumatised by the lesson content. You may wish to discuss strategies with them, their head of year, or where appropriate, their parents/carers. For example, the student might benefit from an exit card, which they can use during the lesson, or they may choose not to participate in the lesson from the start. If this is the case, provide alternative work and supervision for them elsewhere in school. And remember that there may be a student in the class with vulnerability or personal experience in this area of which you are unaware. Always teach the lesson with that student in mind. If the lesson is safe for them, it is safe for the rest of the class.
- **Make others aware:** Ensure others know you are planning to teach this topic. It is particularly important to inform pastoral colleagues in school, as well as those directly responsible for safeguarding, as the lessons may lead to a temporary increase in disclosures. It is also important to inform students in advance that you will be covering this topic, so that students are prepared for the lesson content and those with undisclosed concerns have an opportunity to speak to someone before the lesson.

## Managing public disclosures

Following the advice in the *Creating a safe learning environment* section above will reduce the likelihood of public disclosures in the classroom, by effectively using distancing techniques, establishing ground rules and making an anonymous question box available. Public disclosures in the classroom about an individual's personal experiences must be avoided for a number of reasons:

- The teacher is unable to manage the disclosure in the moment and so the student gets an unsatisfactory immediate response to their disclosure
- Other students in the classroom are made aware of an issue/sensitivity they were otherwise unaware of, and may not react appropriately
- The student may in the moment be happy to share their experience with the class, but may later regret this choice and wish they hadn't been given the forum to do so.

However, despite teachers' best efforts to minimise public disclosures, it is possible students may still make them in class. If a student begins to share something that makes you concerned, try to limit what they say in front of the whole class (this is sometimes described as 'protective interrupting') but reassure them you will follow up with them individually and allow time to do this immediately at the end of the lesson. For example, you might say:

- "Could I ask you to pause? That sounds like something I really need to hear about, but it might be better if just the two of us talk about that after the lesson."
- "It sounds like you're about to say something really important and serious. Can you hold on to it for one minute, then we can talk about it outside of the room."
- "Thank you for sharing that. I would like to talk about it with you some more, but I think it's more appropriate for a private conversation. Can we talk at break time?"

## Responding to student disclosures

First and foremost, teachers must follow their school's safeguarding and child protection policies in response to a disclosure. This might look slightly different in different schools, but will include not asking leading questions, taking notes as soon as possible after the conversation, and reporting immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Whilst most teachers know these steps, what might feel more challenging is how to respond to the student in the moment they are disclosing. Although it might be shocking or upsetting to you to hear the disclosure, remember that the young person has chosen to speak to you because they trust you. And no matter how difficult it might be for you to hear, the disclosure is almost certainly more difficult for them to say, and it has taken a great deal of courage to speak to you.

Working with focus groups of professionals and young people, the NSPCC has designed the following simple steps to support you in responding to student disclosures:

1. Show you care, help them open up
2. Take your time, slow down
3. Show you understand, reflect back

Find out more here: [Let children know you're listening](#)

## What does disclosure look like?

It is also important to note that disclosures can take many different forms, and that young people rarely disclose everything that has happened in one go. Behaviour changes in students can also be an indicator of a desire to disclose, before they are ready to make a verbal disclosure. For example, it may be that students' behaviour in this lesson is in some way unexpected or atypical, which may cause you to become concerned. Similarly, having made students aware of the content of the lesson beforehand, you might notice a particular student is absent from the lesson, which may be an indicator they did not feel able to be in the lesson, and were not yet able to communicate their need for help to a member of staff.

We recommend 'checking in' with students whom, following this lesson, you have become concerned about. This might be simply asking "Are you ok? You seemed quiet/upset/very thoughtful in our lesson today." Remember that students may not yet be ready to speak to you, and reassure them that you will check back in with them in a week's time to see how they are doing. This will reinforce their trust in you and give them an opportunity to prepare to disclose, if they feel ready to.

## A note of warning

Having taught these lessons, some schools may experience a rise in disclosures, as students may feel confident and more able to speak to trusted adults in school, or more aware that what has happened to them is abuse. However, other schools may not see this increase in reports. This may be for various reasons, including that reporting abuse can be very challenging and young people experience many barriers before seeking help. Schools should not assume that simply because they have not received reports of abuse, that there are no victims of abuse among their student population.

## Signposting support

It is essential that in all PSHE education lessons, appropriate support is signposted. This is especially important when teaching about forms of abuse.

## Support for students

Ensure students know where they can seek help and further advice, both now and in the future, if they are concerned. This includes highlighting trusted adults in school, such as their tutor, head of year, the Designated Safeguarding Lead, and other teaching staff. Reassure students that staff are always willing to listen to their concerns. When signposting support, it is important not only to inform pupils of where they can access it, but also to help them understand why they might seek support for themselves, or others, when they might seek support, how to do so and what will happen next if they do.

Highlight organisations where students can access support and report concerns.

[www.childline.org.uk/somethings-not-right](http://www.childline.org.uk/somethings-not-right) - dedicated campaign page

[www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk) - for students to seek advice on a wide range of concerns

[www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre](http://www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre)- for reporting online sexual abuse or exploitation to CEOP

[www.victimsupport.org.uk](http://www.victimsupport.org.uk) – for someone who has been a victim of crime

## Information for teachers

In the first instance, refer to your own school's safeguarding and child protection policies. Further support and information can be accessed:

[www.childline.org.uk/somethings-not-right](http://www.childline.org.uk/somethings-not-right) - dedicated campaign page

[Keeping children safe in education](#) – Department for Education statutory safeguarding guidance

[Recognising and responding to abuse](#) – NSPCC learning

[Let children know you're listening](#) – NSPCC learning