Thrive
Online

Childnet

Educators Guidance

to accompany lesson plans
for young people aged 11-17

18+

Contents

About Thrive Online

Thrive Online aims to empower young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) to build happy and healthy online relationships.

It has been developed by Childnet to:

- Support educators in delivering high quality PSHE and Relationships and Sex Education lessons.

- Give young people with SEND more confidence in managing their digital wellbeing and online relationships.

All the lessons developed for Thrive Online are designed to be scenario-based, interactive, and engaging. Informed by research undertaken with young people with SEND, educators, and parents and carers from across the UK, Thrive Online empowers young people aged 11-17 years old to make positive choices online, whilst providing valuable opportunities to explore and discuss these key topics:

Healthy Relationships

Digital Wellbeing

Online Pornography

Why is this project needed?

All young people have the right to be equipped with the skills, confidence and support they need to thrive online. Despite this, young people with SEND are often not included in online safety conversations even though they are extremely active in this area. Life online can pose unique challenges for those with SEND, in addition to the wider risks and concerns that face all young people.

For many young people with SEND, the internet can be a place where they feel calm and in control. It can be somewhere to make friends and build a community which they may not have in their offline life. With the internet often playing such an important role in their lives, it's crucial they are supported in using it confidently and making choices online that keep themselves and others safe.

"I just think they're so vulnerable but …. they come across as more capable and more socially aware than they actually are. But also, the impact that that has on their physical relationships, their face-to-face relationships and on their mental health. It's massive."

Designated Senior Mental Health Lead, SEND school

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To help them enjoy positive online experiences, young people with SEND need tailored support. However, we know from speaking to educators of young people with SEND that they don't always feel they have the knowledge, confidence or resources to support them in this area. This project aims to provide practical, scenario-based activities that support educators in delivering high-quality, adaptable and accessible online safety education to their SEND learners.

To safeguard the mental health and wellbeing of young people with SEND, their online lives must be included in these conversations. This resource aims to support young people to reflect on how the internet makes them feel, to know what to do if they feel overwhelmed or uncomfortable, and to provide the tailored approach needed to help them thrive online.

> **"SEN pupils need more understanding of [what social media is, how it affects other people and] how to make interactions with good judgement."**
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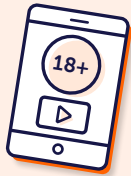> **Teacher, SEND school**

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Thrive Online Lesson Structure

Each topic consists of three lessons. Each lesson is designed to build on the previous one and develop young people's understanding and knowledge of the topic further. We recommend using all three lessons for each topic, but educators may choose to run a single lesson as a stand-alone session. The key learning outcomes from each lesson can be found below. After each lesson, learners will know:

Topic 1: Healthy Relationships

Lesson 1	Lesson 2	Lesson 3
Understanding healthy and unhealthy relationships	**Managing online conflict**	**Consent in online relationships**
• what online relationships are • healthy and unhealthy behaviours in online relationships • the trusted adults in their life that they can talk to if they need support	• how to recognise negative feelings caused by online conflict and how to manage them • that we have choices online • how to make good choices and to respond appropriately when things go wrong online	• what consent means • the importance of consent in a healthy relationship • how to give and receive consent • what makes a healthy romantic relationship

Topic 2: Digital Wellbeing

Lesson 1	Lesson 2	Lesson 3
How does being online make you feel?	**Online pressures**	**Digital resilience**
• the internet can make them feel different emotions • how to recognise when their bodies might be signalling that something online is negatively affecting them • online activities and behaviours which affect digital wellbeing positively and negatively	• the internet can place different pressures on them • the pressures they might face online • the feelings experienced by online pressure	• what digital resilience is • strategies that build digital resilience • making positive choices online can help them to stay in control of life online

Topic 3: Online Pornography	Lesson 1	Lesson 2	Lesson 3
	What is online pornography?	**Reasons and motivations**	**Potential negative impacts**
	• how to define online pornography • other people's understanding and experiences of online pornography may be different • the common assumptions about online pornography and the truths behind them	• the different reasons that a young person might see or watch online pornography • steps they can take instead of watching online pornography • how to get help if they are worried about seeing pornography	• the possible negative impacts of watching online pornography on young people • how these impacts might lead to negative experiences and feelings for young people • actions a young person can take if they watch online pornography and experience these negative feelings.

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How to use the lessons

Each lesson contains a **lesson plan** and accompanying **lesson slides**. The lessons' running times are between **45 and 60 minutes**, and the format of each lesson is:

1. Starter activity

2. Scenario-based film with a pause for discussion before the resolution plays out

3. Main activity

4. Plenary

5. Follow-up challenge

Suggestions for adaptation and extension are provided throughout.

All lessons are provided as free, downloadable PDFs and are licensed under Creative Commons. For more information: **creativecommons.org/licenses/by-ncsa/4.0/**

If you do have amendments, suggestions for activities or feedback, then please contact **education@childnet.com**.

Suggested timings

The running time of each lesson is between **45 and 60 minutes**.

If you find your learners have lots they want to discuss, you may wish to split up the activities further to allocate more time to each one. It is recommended to space out the lessons across a number of days or weeks, rather than deliver all activities on one day or in one short period. This is to allow students time to process the topics covered and not feel too overwhelmed.

Films

Each Thrive Online lesson includes a short film which helps to demonstate positive actions and responses to online situations. In each film, a character speaks directly to the camera to describe a short scenario. There is then a built-in 'pause point' where educators should stop the film and facilitate a discussion with pupils using the provided questions. After the discussion, the film can be resumed and the on-screen resolution can be shared. This leads to a second discussion, again with questions and supporting guidance for edcuators provided.

All the scenarios have been directly informed by Thrive Online research with young people with SEND, their parents, and educators.

Meet the Characters

Leo is 15 and can be a bit impulsive. He's a keen gamer and can sometimes get quite frustrated about things.
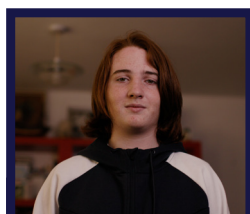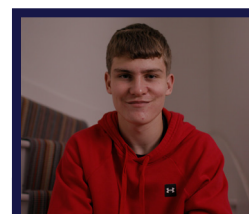
Dion is 14 and loves online games. He's quiet and sensitive.

Jade is 14 and worries a lot. She can be easily swayed. She misses her best friend Sada who is now at a different school.

Sada is 14 and chatting to friends online is important to her. She's usually a confident person but online pressures can make her feel anxious.

Ezra is 16 and very shy. He prefers to communicate with other people online rather than talk to people face to face.

▶ You may wish to provide learners with a copy of these profiles so that they can get to know the characters before watching the films.

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Film Summaries

Digital Wellbeing: Understanding that being online impacts how we feel

Film 1: Leo – This film looks at **how being online can make you feel**, including the positives of being online and the things that some young people find overwhelming or upsetting. When an online search results in Leo seeing something distressing, he is left worried and confused. He soon learns that his early warning signs indicate something is not okay and finds talking to someone can really help.

Film 2: Sada – In this film, the **pressure to be online** and fear of missing out results in Sada joining in with things even though she doesn't want to. This film explores these feelings and highlights how important it is to only do things online that make you feel happy.

Film 3: Jade – This film looks at the **impact on self-esteem** and when a young person compares themselves to the things they see online. Over time, the content she has been viewing contributes to Jade's negative feelings about herself. A friend steps in to help, and Jade makes positive decisions about the things she does online and builds her digial resilience.

Healthy Realationships: Recognising healthy and unhealthy behaviours in online relationships

Film 1: Jade – This film looks at **online pressure in friendships** and why it is important to say no if someone tries to make you do something that you don't want to do, even if they are considered a close friend. Jade caves under Sada's pressure to send a message. Intended as a 'joke,' things backfire, and Jade must figure out how to make things better.

Film 2: Dion – In this film, we look at **conflict online** and demonstrate how to make good choices and respond in the best way when things go wrong. When an argument erupts during an online game, Dion's attempt to stick up for his friend results in him becoming part of the argument. Dion is left feeling confused about whether his actions were the right thing to do or not.

Film 3: Ezra – This film looks at **online romantic relationships** and how to identify the healthy and unhealthy aspects of a relationship. Ezra meets Lara online and the two develop a relationship. As things progress, Ezra finds it hard to meet his girlfriend's expectations and must decide what makes him happy.

Online Ponography: Understanding the potential impact of watching pronography

Film 1: Dion – This film looks at the **myths surrounding pornography**, especially that you can learn everything you need to know about sex and relationships. Influenced by his older cousin, Dion's online search for pornography results in him seeing things he was not expecting. Dion learns that talking to his mum helps to put things right and learns some truths about watching pornography.

Film 2: Sada – This film looks at **peer pressure and the importance of gaining consent** before sharing something online with other people. After being teased because she doesn't know what it is, Sada is shown a pornographic image without agreeing to see it. Annoyed and upset, she decides to speak to a teacher.

Film 3: Ezra – This film examines the **negative impact on body image and mental wellbeing** that pornography can have. When Ezra's interest in porn begins to damage his self-esteem and he begins to compare himself to the things he is seeing, Ezra soon learns that pornography is not real and the things he has been watching are not a truthful representation of people, sex or relationships.

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Before running the lessons

It is important that all educators feel comfortable and confident in their use and delivery of the Thrive Online lesson materials. Below is a checklist created to support educators in their planning and preparation for delivery of the materials.

For some key areas, more detailed advice is available later in this guidance document and is linked (where relevant) below:

☐ I know which young people I want to work with, which lessons I wish to use, and their current understanding of the topic

See each lesson plan for further detail on prior knowledge required of young people.

☐ I have communicated with relevant colleagues to ensure adequate support is available for myself and the young people

For more advice on this see 'Taking a whole school approach' p.29

☐ I have read through the lesson content and thought about my teaching strategy, young people's previous experiences and existing knowledge, and feel confident in the approach I will take

For more advice on this see 'Establishing a safe and supportive learning environment' p.30 and 'Thinking about Thrive Online in the context of existing knowledge' p.32

☐ I have followed my school/setting's policy to inform parents of the lesson content and given them the opportunity to see learning materials where necessary

For more advice on this see 'Taking a whole school approach' p.29

☐ I am confident in my school/ setting's safeguarding procedures and policies and am prepared for any disclosures which may arise as a result of the lessons

For more advice on this see 'Safeguarding' p.33

☐ I have familiarised myself with the topic guidance documents

Available on p.11-22

☐ I have set up the space where I am delivering the lesson, checked that the video content can be accessed* and that necessary equipment is ready for displaying the lesson slides

☐ I have printed or gathered any physical resources required for the lessons I am delivering

▶ *Note for educators

We would recommend checking you can access the relevant resources in your school/setting, particularly the film content. Due to the terminology that is referenced by this resource, some material may be blocked by internet filters. Please speak to your school/setting's IT administrators or support to resolve this.

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Topic Guidance

Healthy Relationships

This guidance accompanies the lesson plans, films and teaching activities in the Thrive Online toolkit.

It aims to give educators an overview of the subject and an idea of young people's perspectives on it so you can feel well informed before delivering the activities and discussing the themes.

For more information on how you can deliver the activities on this topic in a safe, supportive and appropriate way, see the Further Guidance in this document.

How do young people feel about healthy relationships online?

We conducted a number of focus groups and surveys with young people with SEND between the ages of 13-19. They told us the best things about using the internet as part of their relationships:

"Talking to your friends and family."
Girl, aged 16

"It is better though because when people live far away, and you can't see them in school it is good if you can FaceTime them."
Girl, aged 17

"I believe that technology can make relationships a lot better because it makes them accessible."
Boy, aged 15

"Sometimes if someone has an argument it might be easier to say sorry online than face to face."
Girl, aged 16

"Gaming and talking to school friends."
Boy, aged 15

"If you knew the person in real life taking that relationship online so you could talk to them more would undeniably make the relationship better."
Boy, aged 15

"Can talk even more when they are not with each other."
Girl, aged 14

"Without the internet some relationships might plausibly never have happened."
Boy, aged 15

"Reaching out to people you haven't spoken to in ages."
Girl, aged 15

The internet makes friendships accessible.

100%

of the young people we spoke to said they talk to their friends online.

"I think a lot of our students feel really isolated. Very few of our students do anything outside of school. They literally come to school, they go home, they sit in their bedrooms. So having an online forum is their way of reaching out. It's their way of connecting."

Designated Senior Mental Health Lead, SEND School

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They also told us how their relationships could be negatively affected by the internet:

"I have witnessed some very, very angry arguments and some of my friends and some people really do hate each other."
Boy, aged 15

"You can say as much angry and negative stuff as you want and not have much backlash."
Boy, aged 15

"Online is really hard to convey the nuances or social interaction like showing sarcasm online."
Boy, aged 15

"When people disagree on something."
Boy, aged 15

"People go back and forth over messaging, and I think why?"
Girl, aged 16

"They would like text you something nasty, but they would never say it to your face"
Girl, aged 14

"Commenting on my weight, making fun of that I have a learning disability even when he has a learning disability."
Girl, aged 17

"I feel like arguments online are a lot worse than arguments in real life."
Girl, aged 16

"An unhealthy one would say I hate you but a healthy one would say nice things."
Girl, aged 14

"I think it's helping them to understand they've got a choice. When they see a message come through, we need to teach them that they have choices."
Designated Senior Mental Health Lead, SEND school

"I don't think some of them appreciate what a positive relationship would be online."
Teacher, SEND School

What is a healthy relationship?

A healthy relationship should:

- provide those involved with a sense of mental and physical wellbeing,
- make people feel happy and safe,
- be based on kindness and respect,
- recognise and respect people's feelings, and
- value and respect each other's decisions.

Relationships take many forms and, depending on what the relationship is, a healthy one can mean different things. For example, the relationship between friends, whether it is based offline or online, is different to a romantic relationship or one between extended family members.

"Well, a relationship is quite hard to explain for me but in short it's when we feel the most comfortable with someone and you want to spend as much time with them as possible and be there for them when it is most needed."
Boy, aged 15

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Why should we be teaching young people about online healthy relationships?

For young people with SEND, their social world and access to making friends might not be as wide or accessible as it is for other young people, so the internet can provide a way of keeping in touch or making new friends. However, since many young people with SEND need help with their offline interactions, they may need extra help and support to understand and manage their online relationships.

Young people need to be able to identify the positive relationships they have around them in order to recognise when a relationship with someone or something becomes unhealthy. Understanding the difference is important but might be challenging for young people with SEND, as occasional friendship squabbles, fallouts and disagreements can be a typical part of some friendships. It doesn't necessarily mean they are unhealthy if they are dealt with in a healthy way and do not form a pattern of unhealthy behaviour. The internet can hide certain behaviours from public view, so it is important for young people to be able to recognise when a relationship becomes unhealthy and that this behaviour is unacceptable.

All young people have the right to be happy and have relationships that make them feel good about themselves. With 50% of the young people we surveyed telling us that they prefer to talk to people online, it is clear that, for some, the internet can be the easiest way to make friends or have romantic relationships. However, things can be misinterpreted online, causing disagreements or conflict. Only 50% of young people we asked said they would tell someone if they had been treated in an unkind way online. This shows a clear need to teach all young people to know when, how and where to get help.

What can I do as an educator to support young people with their online relationships?

- See the Educators Guidance for more advice on creating a safe and supportive learning environment.

- Remain non-judgemental and open when discussing sensitive topics like healthy relationships online with young people.

- Find out about their life online and who they like to communicate with. This will give you an idea of whether they like to chat to people who they only know online.

- Remember that every learner's understanding and experience of healthy relationships is going to be different. Use **Healthy Relationships – Lesson 1** to explore different healthy and unhealthy online behaviours in relationships.

- Make them aware that the things they do online can impact how others feel.

- Talk about the different types of relationships they have in their lives and what these mean. Talk about the differences and similarities between different types of relationship.

- Teach them strategies and what they should do if they think a relationship is becoming unhealthy. Use **Healthy Relationships – Lesson 2** to explore these strategies.

- After the lessons, follow up with staff and parents/carers, and give learners a way to express any questions or concerns that they may have (e.g. a worry box).

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Digital Wellbeing

This guidance accompanies the lesson plans, films and teaching activities in the Thrive Online toolkit. It aims to give educators an overview of the subject and an idea of young people's perspectives on it, so you can feel well informed before delivering the activities and discussing the themes.

How do young people feel about their digital wellbeing?

We conducted a number of focus groups and surveys with young people with SEND, between the ages of 13-19, and they told us the best things about life online were:

"Talking to people online, especially friends because of the current situation (Covid-19)."
Boy, aged 15

"How diverse it can be."
Boy, aged 15

"Talking to friends."
Girl, aged 15

"Going on YouTube and watching videos."
Boy, aged 16

"Video games, some of the biggest laughs I've had have been on video games."
Boy, aged 14

"Reaching out to people you haven't spoken to in ages."
Boy, aged 14

"Talking to friends and family."
Girl, aged 15

When asked about what they enjoy doing the most online...

68%
of young people said gaming

closely followed by

61%
who said watching videos

and

41%
who said listening to music.

They also told us the things which negatively impact them the most online were:

"Being judged by others (with) no consequences."
Boy, aged 15

"Receiving hate – for people with special needs, there is a lot of hate towards them."
Girl, aged 17

"Fake news on the internet, it can really make people upset [...] I always seem to believe it and I think it's going to happen."
Boy, aged 14

"Pictures of things that are like really rude and horrible messages and that stuff."
Girl, aged 17

"Big pressure for especially girls to look unrealistically attractive."
Boy, aged 15

"When I see photos of videos of scary things, like people or animals being treated badly."
Girl, aged 16

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The surveys showed

32% of young people said they were 'often' affected negatively when they 'see photos of videos of scary things, like people or animals being treated badly.'

22% said they were 'often' affected when they 'don't win or do well in a game' and when they 'have disagreements with my friends.'

43% said they were 'sometimes' affected when they 'see someone upsetting other people (online).'

Screen time

When asked about screen time in the Thrive Online focus groups, interestingly young people didn't see this as a contributing factor to their digital wellbeing. However, it was an issue which educators and parents expressed as an area of concern. Young people spoke about the varying screen time boundaries their parents and carers put in place from a 1 hour per day time limit to no limits at all. Young people did acknowledge that it can be easy to spend a long amount of time on a device, commenting, **"I will be like in my room playing on my phone, next thing I know it's like 8pm and I'm like oh I need to put my phone on charge and go to bed."** (Girl, aged 17)

When participants were asked about how they would know if they were spending too much time online, 45% said it was when their battery runs out on a device followed by 34% saying it was when a timer or clock showed them, and 24% said if the device feels hot to hold.

When asked about how they would feel if they weren't able to go online for a day, 50% said they "weren't bothered," 40% said they would "be upset because going online was really important," and 10% said they would be "happy" and recognised that they go online too much.

Further research from the London Grid for Learning, entitled 'Hopes and streams' (2018), asked 40,000 young people across the UK about their lives online found:

The things young people love were:

• Making friends
• Having fun
• The sense of community
• Keeping in touch
• Playing games
• Videos and photos
• Giving and receiving support

The upsetting things they faced online were:

• Hate speech, bullying, fighting
• Self-harm and suicide
• Violent and obscene videos
• Animals being hurt
• Being asked for nudes
• Pornography
• Sexual approaches from adults

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What is digital wellbeing?

Our overall wellbeing is determined by our daily physical and emotional experiences.

As technology continues to be such a huge part of young people's lives, from the way they represent who they are to the interactions they have with others, it too has an impact on their wellbeing, how they feel, their thoughts, their behaviour, and their physical and mental health.

This is often referred to as 'digital wellbeing.'

Digital wellbeing can be impacted by:

- the choices we make online,
- the content we see online,
- the interactions we have with others online, and
- how long we spend engaging with technology and the internet.

Why should we be teaching young people about digital wellbeing?

We know the internet presents fantastic opportunities for young people, especially those with SEND. It's a place where they can connect with others, find a sense of belonging, and often it's a place of relaxation. They may spend longer online than others due to this and find it harder to know when to come offline without help from an adult. Since many young people with SEND need support with their wellbeing and emotions offline, they may need further support to manage their online wellbeing too.

Our research showed us that young people don't always have a positive experience online and it can be hard for young people to navigate.

When asked whether going online was a positive experience...

50% of the young people we asked through our survey said "yes,"

however **18%** said "no,"

and over **30%** "weren't sure."

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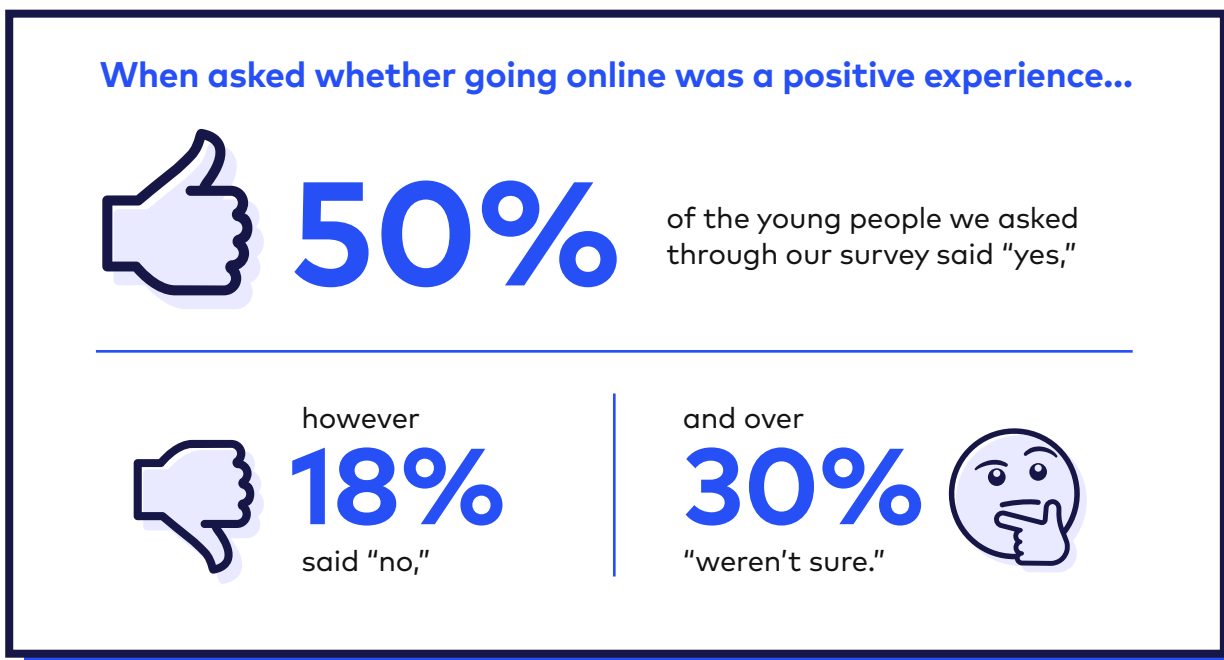
With the online world being such a huge part of young people's lives today, it can have a strong emotional impact on them, their self-esteem, and how they develop into young adults. Young people's online experiences can have a wider impact on their lives, their relationships with others, their safety, and their overall wellbeing. Those with SEND can sometimes find it hard to understand their emotions and express how they feel. They may turn to the internet for information or support but find they don't know what to trust or how to seek help. It's very important that we help them to understand how to use it safely, sensibly, and with an awareness of how it can impact on them, so they can take control of their digital lives and not let it control them.

> **"Looking at social media in regard to wellbeing we want to teach young people that they have choice over who they follow, what content they are seeing and how they respond to that. A lot get sucked into YouTubers portraying glamourous lives and think that's how life should be. It needs to be targeted on reality and what makes them feel good."**
>
> **Designated Senior Mental Health Lead, SEND school**

What can I do as an educator to support young people with issues around digital wellbeing?

- See the Educators Guidance for more advice on creating a safe and supportive learning environment.

- Remain non-judgemental and open when discussing sensitive topics like digital wellbeing with young people.

- Find out about their life online. Ask them about their internet use, what do they like doing online and why, to show you are interested and someone they can talk to.

- Remember that every learner's understanding and experience of digital wellbeing is going to be different. Use **Digital Wellbeing – Lesson 1** to explore how being online can impact how they feel, both the positives and the negatives.

- Make them aware that the things they do online can impact how others feel.

- Encourage them to use the internet for good, the things they enjoy and in a way which can have a positive impact on others.

- Give them strategies to respond in difficult situations which can build their digital resilience. These ideas are explored in **Digital Wellbeing – Lesson 3**.

- After the lessons, follow up with staff and parents/carers, and give learners a way to express any questions or concerns that they may have (e.g. a worry box).

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Online Pornography

This guidance accompanies the lesson plans, films, and teaching activities in the Thrive Online toolkit. It aims to give educators an overview of the subject and an idea of young people's perspectives on it, so you can feel well informed before delivering the activities and discussing the themes.

For more information on how you can deliver the activities on this topic in a safe, supportive and appropriate way, see Further Guidance in this document.

What are young people telling us about online pornography?

We conducted a number of focus groups and surveys with young people with SEND between the ages of 13-19. We asked them how they think seeing online pornography might make someone their age feel:

interested **50%**

happy 22%

worried **39%**

upset **22%**

confused **44%**

embarrassed **61%**

excited **22%**

awkward **72%**

scared **22%**

Some young people also thought that watching online pornography might make a young person feel self-conscious about themselves and their body:

"They will feel insecure, they are naturally going to compare themselves."

Boy, aged 15

We also asked why a young person might end up watching online pornography:

"Part of it is curiosity, like maybe one of their mates is watching it and they are like you should look it up [...] and then they do and then they go down a rabbit hole."

Boy, aged 15

If someone was telling them to look at online pornography, **26%** of young people said they would look at it, because they were interested or because they would find it hard to say no. Only **5%** would tell someone about it.

47% think or somewhat think that online pornography is a good way to find out about sex and relationships.

63% said they wouldn't like the adults they know to teach them about online pornography.

A BBFC research report, entitled 'Young people, Pornography & Age-verification' (2020), provides further insight into young people's use, experiences and perspectives of online pornography.

Three-quarters of parents (75%) felt their child would not have seen pornography online, but among the children of those parents,

53% said they had in fact seen pornography.

This figure is likely to be higher in reality due to under-reporting in the survey.

The research also showed the percentage of young people that had seen pornography in the last two weeks:

18% of 11-13-year-olds; **32%** of 14-15-year-olds

and

41% of 16-17 year-olds

Also, **45%** of those who watched pornography had intentionally done so, at least in part, to 'learn' about sex.

Some girls in particular spoke of their fear that aggressive depictions of sex would be seen as 'normal' among young male viewers of pornography and worried it would be copied in physical sexual encounters.

18% of 16-17-year-olds who had an active sex life said they had either asked or been asked to incorporate things from pornography into their relations with their partner(s).

What is online pornography?

Online pornography can be images or videos online of naked adults, or adults having sex or showing sexual behaviour. Some people may enjoy looking at or watching these for sexual pleasure.

Make sure your learners understand that online pornography:

- has an age rating of 18+ due to the sexually explicit and potentially harmful nature of its content,

- is a performance that has been staged, often to make money, and

- is not a realistic depiction of healthy and respectful relationships, even though the sex acts shown on camera are real.

These ideas are explored in greater detail within the lessons.

What does the law say?

If children under the age of 18 watch online pornography, they have not broken the law. However, it is illegal for someone else to show it to them or help them to access to it. Pornographic magazines, videos and online content can be legally bought at 18.

There are some types of pornography that are illegal to ever be seen, distributed or be in possession of – even for an adult. These are called "extreme pornographic images," and include acts that threaten a person's life, acts which are likely to or do result in serious injury, degrading pornography, violent pornography (which includes rape and abuse), or anything involving those under the age of 18.

Sharing 'nudes', or 'sexting'

'Nudes' or 'sending nudes' is the sending or posting of self-generated sexually explicit or nude images, videos or live-streams online. Adults may refer to this as 'sexting,' but young people more often use 'nudes' or 'pics.' These images might have been acquired with or without the consent of the person in the image. The motivation behind sharing this sort of image is not always sexually motivated. It may be for other reasons such as:

- to 'fit in' or win the approval of others,
- out of peer pressure,
- to see how others react to it,
- for 'fun', or
- to hurt or embarrass someone.

> Both the consensual and non-consensual sharing of explicit images of children under the age of 18 is illegal under various Acts:
>
> - Protection of Children Act 1978 – England and Wales
> - Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982 – Scotland
> - Protection of Children Act (Northern Ireland) Order 1978

All incidents of youth-produced sexual imagery should be responded to in line with your education setting's child protection policy. It may be appropriate for the setting to manage the incident directly after they have conducted a full and robust risk assessment.

In any case where the material was shared without consent, obtained by pressure, or shared with malice, it will most likely need police involvement. Under their duty of care, the police may need to investigate any aggravating factors, such as coercion, blackmail, adult involvement, or existing vulnerabilities, and to collect evidence, in order to make the most appropriate and proportionate response. The police have publicly stated they are not seeking to unnecessarily criminalise young people for this type of behaviour, particularly with first time offences.

Aside from the law, this kind of behaviour can have other negative impacts for young people such as:

- the fear or embarrassment of the image being seen by others,
- the loss of trust in their peers,
- the loss of trust in adults if it is handled in a way that blames the victim,
- the fear of their family being involved, and
- the fear of getting 'in trouble.'

> ▶ *Further advice on how to respond to instances of sharing nudes can be found in the UKCIS advice Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people.*

Why should we be teaching young people about online pornography?

All young people have a right to good quality sex and relationships education that prepares them for the adult world. It's likely that many young people will come across online pornography at some point in their lives. The internet is a place where pornography can easily be searched for, shared and looked at. Young people might look for it themselves, see online it by accident, or have a friend show it to them.

Those with SEND may have less pre-existing knowledge of what pornography is and may not realise what they're about to watch. Some young people with SEND can be more impressionable and may be more easily influenced by others to watch online pornography. Many young people with SEND want to engage in the same activities as their peers but may lack some of the emotional maturity or capabilities to do so and could be more negatively impacted by watching online pornography.

Young people with SEND also often rely on consistency, so may become confused and stressed if they see something that disrupts their usual routine. Due to some SEND young people's more literal thinking, they may have less awareness of the effects pornography can have on them, when someone is trying to negatively influence them, or how they can get help when they have an issue.

Approaching this topic with young people is important to help them understand the realities of pornography, and an opportunity to counter the unhealthy depictions of sex and relationships with effective and inclusive education around what a healthy relationship is.

These discussions also provide an opportunity to discuss some of the negative impacts viewing pornography can have, give advice on how to handle these emotions, and inform young people on how they can seek help if they feel worried or upset by anything online.
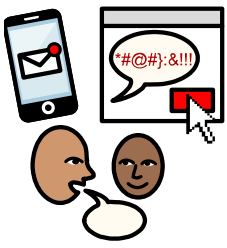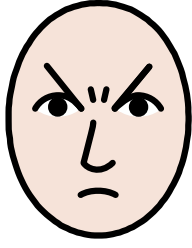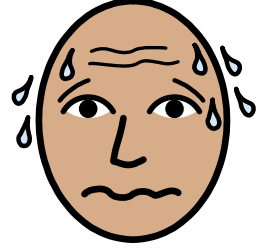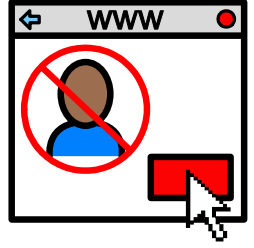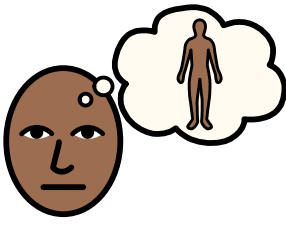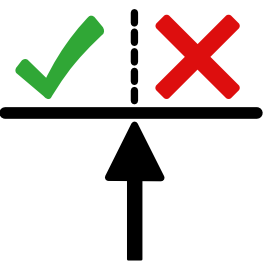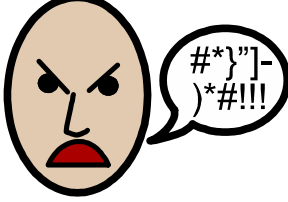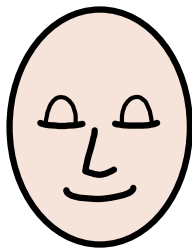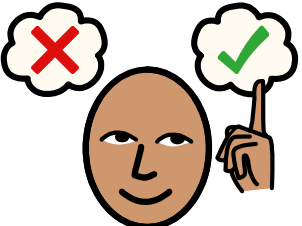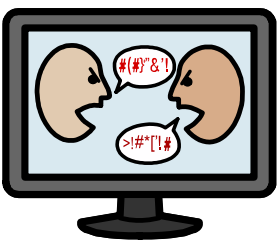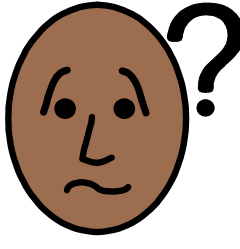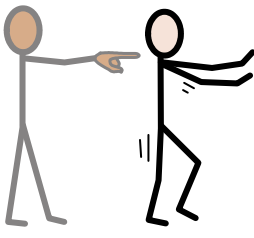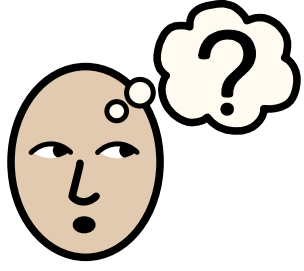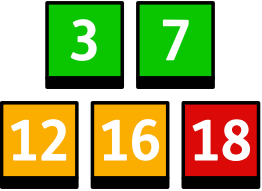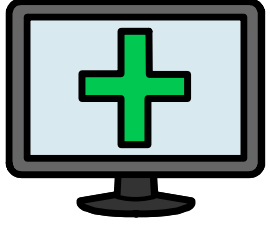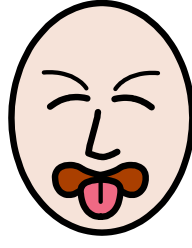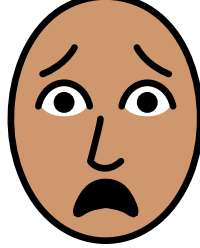
What can I do as an educator to support young people with issues around online pornography?

- See the Educators Guidance for more advice on creating a safe and supportive learning environment.

- Remain non-judgemental and open when discussing sensitive topics like pornography with young people.

- Reassure them that no pornography will be shown during the lesson or is expected to be viewed as a result of this lesson.

- Reassure them that there is no expectation that they will have watched pornography or that they will have to share whether or not they have seen it before.

- Avoid telling young people to just not watch pornography – it is unlikely to be effective and could dissuade a young person from talking to a trusted adult about any negative emotions they felt if they have seen it, or see it in the future.

- Remember that every learner's understanding and experience of online pornography is going to be different. Use '**Online Pornography Lesson 1 – What is online pornography?**' to explore the myths and realities of online pornography, and to find out what your learners do and do not know.

- Remind learners that they always have a choice, that they do not have to watch online pornography if they don't want to, and that there are actions they can take instead of watching it. These ideas are explored in '**Online Pornography Lesson 2 - Reasons and motivations.**'

- Explain to learners the possible negative impacts of watching online pornography, but that there are things they can do to improve the situation if they do experience these negative impacts, including talking to a trusted adult. These ideas are explored in '**Online Pornography Lesson 3 – Potential impacts.**'

- After the lessons, follow up with staff and parents/carers, and give learners a way to express any questions or concerns that they may have (e.g. a worry box).

Thrive
Online
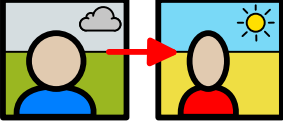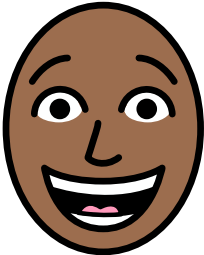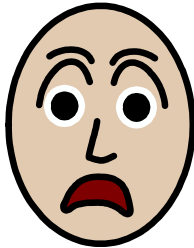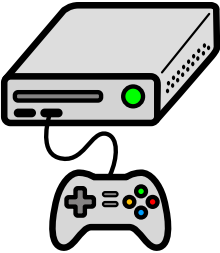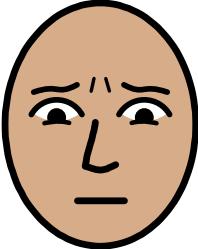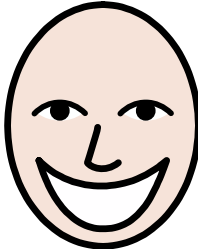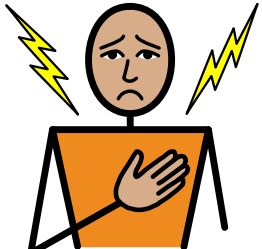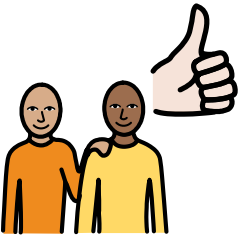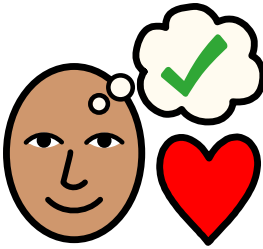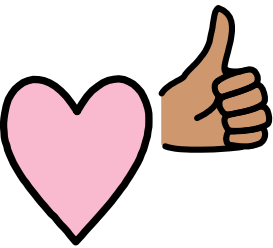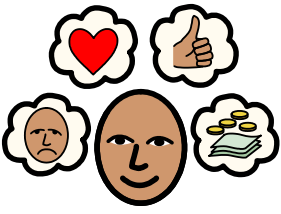
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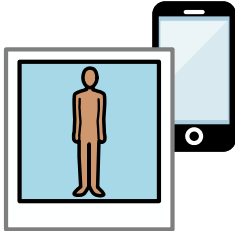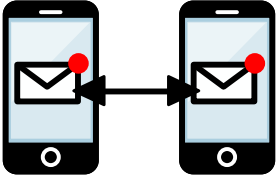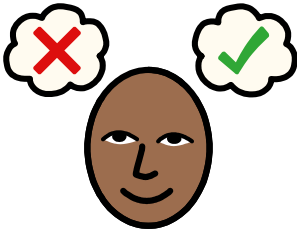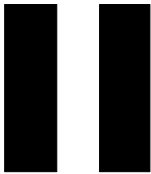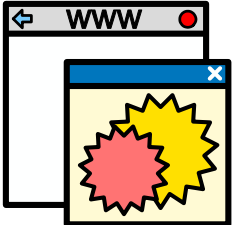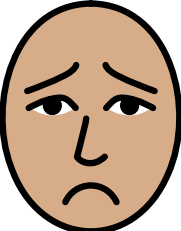
Widgit Symbols

action	annoyed	anxious	block
body image	boundries	bullying	calm
choice	conflict	confused	consent
control	curious	cyberbullying	digital age game rating
digital wellbeing	disgusted	distressed	don't retaliate

Thrive Online
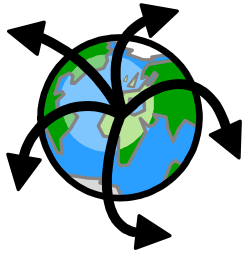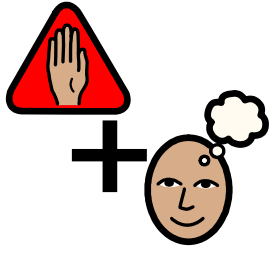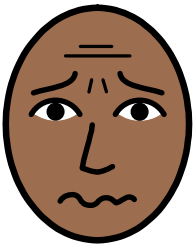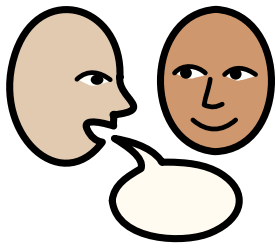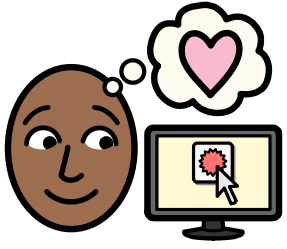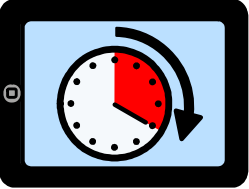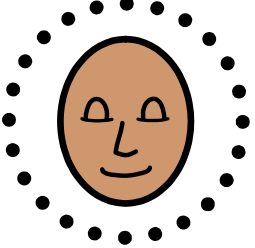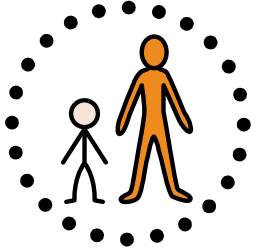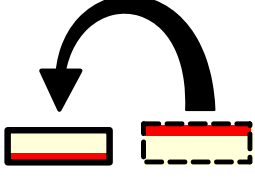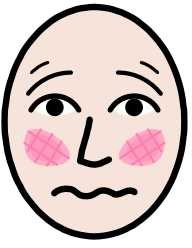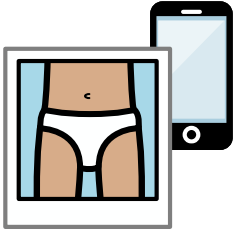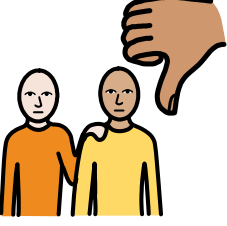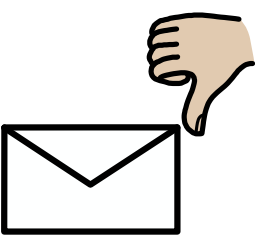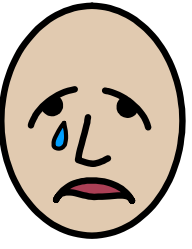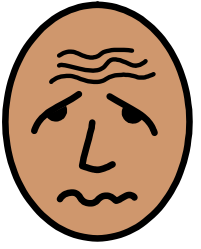
Widgit Symbols

edited	excited	family	feelings
filters	friendship	frightened	frustrated
gaming	guilty	happy	harm
healthy relationship	insecure	interesting	internet safety settings
kindness	love	messaged	motive reason

Thrive Online

Widgit Symbols

negative	nude naked	nude photograph	online contact
online content	online pornography	opinion	pause
personal information	pop up	positive	pressure
relationship	relaxed	report	respect
romantic relationship	sad	safe	say no

Thrive Online

Widgit Symbols

sex	share	social media	stop and think
stressed	take a break	tell	temptation
time online	trust	trusted adult	trustworthy people
turn it off	turn screen over	uncomfortable	underwear photograph
unhealthy relationship	unkind message	upset	worried

Thrive Online

Glossary

Advert	A marketing technique to promote a product and entice someone to purchase.
Age rating	A classification, specifying a minimum age for something based on its content.
Block	To restrict access to.
Body image	The way someone thinks and feels about themselves physically and how they believe others see them.
Conflict	A serious disagreement or argument.
Consent	An agreement made by someone with the freedom and ability to decide something.
Digital wellbeing	The impact that online experiences have on how we feel, our thoughts, our behaviour and our physical and mental health.
Digital resilience	Understanding how being online makes you feel and making choices to keep yourself safe and happy.
Discrimination	Treating a person or particular group of people differently or unfairly based on their identity (gender, race, religion etc.).
dm	Direct message. A private message sent via social media platforms or games.
Group chat	A messaging group consisting of 3 or more people. These can be people who already know each other or include people who don't know each other but who have been added by a contact they already know. In situations such as this, members' phone numbers and profile pictures can often be visible to the whole group, including anyone they do not know.
Healthy relationship	When all individuals in a relationship are able to decide for themselves what they see as acceptable, and this view is respected and valued.
Online	Any website, app or digital platform including social media platforms, gaming, and direct messaging services. Whilst some professionals may prefer to use the term 'digital,' young people are more familiar with the term 'online.'
Online pornography	Images or videos online of naked adults, or adults having sex or showing sexual behaviour.

Thrive Online

Pop-up	Online adverts that suddenly appear in the foreground of something else, with a purposeful intention to grab attention to bait someone into clicking on the image.
Post	To publish an image, comment, video or link on social media or in an online chat.
Prejudice	An unfair or unreasonable prejudged opinion, feeling or belief, generally formed without experience, understanding or knowledge.
Peer pressure	The direct or indirect influence from people of a similar age or social group to behave in a certain way.
Protected characteristic	It is illegal to discriminate against someone based on these aspects of their identity: age - disability - gender reassignment - marriage and civil partnership - pregnancy and maternity - race - religion or belief - sex - sexual orientation.
Report	To identify a worry or concern and pass it on to the relevant people, platform, or authority.
Unhealthy relationship	Where one or all in a relationship have lost respect and value for one another. When a pattern of negative behaviour begins to grow which makes a relationship unhappy or imbalanced.
SEND	Refers to people who have Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.
'Send nudes'	A term used by young people to request or pressure others for nude images. More widely used by young people than 'sexting.'
Sexting	The sending or posting of self-generated sexually explicit or nude images, videos or live-streams online. These images might have been acquired with or without the consent of the person in the image.
Share	Depending on the context, this can be publishing an image, comment, video or link, with others, publicly or privately, on social media, or forwarding on an image, comment or link to others via a message.
Stereotype	A set idea that people have about what someone or something is like, especially anything which generalises a whole group as having the same behaviours, qualities or features.
Story	A function on social media apps such as Instagram and Snapchat. A story allows users to share photos and videos in slideshow format. Separate from users' profiles that often include carefully selected and edited images, stories are used for real-time sharing. They are usually only available to view for a limited time e.g. 24 hours.

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Further Guidance

Taking a whole-school approach

When thinking about teaching and learning of topics like digital wellbeing and healthy relationships, best practice is to set these in the context of a wider whole school/setting approach to supporting young people. Senior leadership and educators delivering PSHE or RSE content may find it beneficial to consider relevant learning materials in relation to school/setting policies and values (for example, acceptable use, behaviour, bullying and safeguarding policies).

It is recommended that any educator who is intending to deliver the Thrive Online materials also does the following:

- Include Senior Leadership in conversations around the Thrive Online topics, their coverage with young people and why you feel it is important to discuss in your school/setting. Ask for support, extra training, or collaboration with other agencies if you feel it would be beneficial.

- Communicate with colleagues about the topics you are planning to teach and learn more about what other educators find successful or challenging when teaching similar lessons.

This can help to ensure that messaging, teaching strategies and content is consistent.

Additionally, it may be helpful to engage other members of staff in the delivery of the learning materials, to ensure sufficient support for the lead educator and all young people.

This could take the form of:

- Informing staff of the timings of delivery of Thrive Online materials, in case you need to call on them to offer further support to any young person who may be affected.

- Providing a named member of staff who young people can go to during any session if they feel they need to leave the room, e.g. Pastoral Manager, Head of Year.

- Requesting the presence of an additional member of staff in the room when you deliver the lesson content.
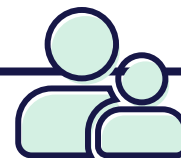
- Talking through how you will approach these topics with another member of staff.

- Observing another staff member deliver the content before you decide if you are comfortable enough to deliver them.

Thrive Online

Working with parents and carers

It is best practice to inform parents and carers of the PSHE/RSE lessons you are planning to deliver in advance, including those on the topics covered by Thrive Online. This means they will be better prepared to support their children at home, especially if they have questions relating to the lesson content. We would recommend giving parents and carers plenty of advance notice, so they can ask any questions or view the materials you will be using. For some topics and depending on the statutory curriculum where you are teaching, parents and carers may have the right to withdraw their children from sessions on some topics. Educators are advised to work with their school/setting's Senior Leadership Team if they believe this to be the case.

Separate Thrive Online resources have been created for parents and carers to support their children with SEND in managing their online lives and relationships. These cover the same topics of digital wellbeing, healthy relationships and online pornography and include question and answer videos, which can be shared with your parent community or the parents of the pupils you are using these resources with. This can help to build consistency in the messages young people receive.

Establishing a safe and supportive learning environment

When delivering any activity that addresses potentially sensitive subjects, it is essential to begin by creating a safe, supportive environment. By helping young people to feel confident and secure, they are more likely to share their ideas and opinions, ask questions, and contribute to discussions without fear of judgement or negative feedback.

The scenarios, film content and activities throughout Thrive Online have been informed by the experiences of young people and are designed to be relevant and realistic. For many of your students this may be the first opportunity they have had to discuss such online experiences, and for others it may be the first time they are hearing or learning about some issues. This makes being sensitive to the students' needs even more important.

Additionally, some students will have their own views and opinions, informed by their individual experiences. Acknowledge their views and experiences as valid and support them in expressing their own thoughts and conclusions sincerely and thoughtfully.

The following tips can help establish a learning environment where young people feel safe and supported to best communicate:

1. Create set of ground rules

Work with your students to agree on a set of ground rules that clearly state the expectations from behaviour and discussions. It is important that students take an active role in creating these, so that they feel ownership, agency and responsibility over them. Language should be clear and accessible to all students, or you may wish to use visual symbols or actions as well. An effective set of ground rules will, as far as possible, be framed as positive behaviours.

Examples could include: We will listen to one another. We will support one another. We will allow others time to speak. We will inform our teacher if we are worried about something.

2. Non-judgemental approach

Although some views or opinions can and should be challenged, it is important for both the educator and other learners not to shame or judge a learner who shares something sensitive. Additionally, put any personal agenda or judgement aside. We know that embarrassment and fear of being told off prevent many young people from talking to an adult about online experiences around relationships and online pornography. Young people need to be actively reassured they will not face judgement or shame in talking about these experiences and know they will be supported.

3. Encourage inclusivity

Remind learners of your school/organisation policy around treating others with respect. Make it clear that learners are expected to be mindful of the ways other people work and communicate to them that everyone's opinions are valid.

4. Space for questions and concerns

Students may have questions they feel uncomfortable asking in front of the rest of the group. Ensure you provide a method for sharing any questions they have that they don't feel comfortable asking publicly. This could be a question box, an email address, or a set member of staff who is available to talk to. Students could also use non-verbal cues such as a particular gesture or a card/object to inform staff if they need additional support or are feeling worried.

5. 'No real names' policy

Ask learners to talk in the third person and speak about 'a friend' or 'someone they know' instead of using people's real names if they are recounting a story or an example. If learners do feel they need to share a personal story, signpost them to a time and place where they can do so privately with an appropriate member of staff.

6. No obligation to participate

Make students aware that, if at any point they would prefer not to participate, it is okay to take some time away and re-join the lesson later. Ensure there is a space and adequate supervision in order for them to do this.

7. Think about your physical space

Decide beforehand if you would like to change the seating arrangement of your space. Learners may feel more comfortable seated in a circle or in smaller groups.

Thinking about Thrive Online in the context of existing knowledge

Due to the sensitive topics covered by the Thrive Online materials, it's important to consider delivery of the session in the context of both students and your own existing knowledge. Educators should be mindful of any ongoing previous online experiences which could shape young people's responses to the subjects being discussed and ensure they feel confident in delivering key messages or responding to questions.

Educator expertise

It can seem like knowledge of the internet and technology comes naturally to young people. Educators may feel unsure of how to deliver these sessions if they feel they have different online experiences to that of their students, but it is important to consider the following:

- Technology plays a part, but other factors such as friendships, romantic relationships, peer group dynamics, wider societal influences and teenage experimentation can all play a role in how a young person might behave online. The advice and guidance teachers can deliver around these topics can also be applied to online situations.

- Many situations young people face are neither solely online nor offline, but a merging of both. Young people may not consider there to be much distinction between the two.

- Educators' life experience, teaching practice and common sense are all important tools in supporting students with their online lives.

Ongoing or previous online incidents among students

- Try to avoid delivering materials in direct response to online incidents among your students. This may lead to them feeling targeted or embarrassed in front of their peers.

- You may wish to speak to any students who might be affected by the lessons beforehand. Talk to them about what the lesson will cover and remind them who or where they can go to for further advice and support. This may be within the school, such as yourself, the Designated Safeguarding Lead, or the Pastoral Lead, or external help, such as Childline, their parents/carers, or the police.

- Before and after the activities, point out to all students where they can go to for further advice and support. In the days and weeks after the activities, give regular reminders of the help and support that is available to them.

Introducing topics that students may not have heard of

Young people are experiencing increasing pressures from the internet and social media, but it is important to remember that they all have different maturation rates and levels of sexual awareness. Therefore, it is vital to explore the issues they may be facing in an age-appropriate manner to enable them to form healthy relationships with others and their own sexual awareness.

- You may wish to begin each topic with a brief pre-assessment of your students' understanding and needs which will help you to ensure the lessons are pitched appropriately.

- It is also important to take a sensitive and non-judgemental approach to these topics and work in partnership with parents/carers.

- Finally, you may also wish to use techniques such as 'Save it for later' boxes/walls to capture questions and discussions not appropriate for that session.

Safeguarding

Online safety is a safegarding issue, and it is possible that as a result of discussion and content covered by the Thrive Online materials, a student may make a disclosure to you about something they (or a peer) have experienced. The following tips have been provided to support educators in responding quickly and effectively to such a disclosure:

Before delivering Thrive Online materials:

- Ensure you are familiar with your school/setting's safeguarding and child protection policies.

- Inform your safeguarding team/lead or senior leadership team of the content of the sessions and the possibility of an increase in the number of reports being made by students about online experiences.

- Set expectations around disclosures in advance. Remind students that if something they disclose to you is a child protection issue, then you cannot promise to keep it a secret. Explain that it's possible you will need to inform another member of staff (e.g. Designated Safeguarding Lead) in order to get the best advice and support for that student.

If a student makes a disclosure about their online experiences:

- Be mindful of how you respond and try not to cast judgement. Try to remain calm and understanding if they disclose a shocking story or ask a leading question of a personal nature.

- Let them know how much of a positive step talking to someone about their experiences is, and acknowledge the difficulty they have potentially overcome to do so.

- Offer immediate reassurance and support if they are distressed.

- Follow your school or setting's safeguarding procedures as you would for any other type of disclosure.

- Where possible, ask the student if they would like you to stay involved with the rest of the reporting process, particularly if you need to escalate it to senior colleagues or external agencies such as the police.

Thinking about language

Whilst educators understand and apply terms such as 'safeguarding,' 'Designated Safeguarding Lead,' 'child protection,' and 'disclosure,' students may not understand these. Make sure to clarify the definitions of these terms if you make any reference to them. You may find it useful to prepare an accessible description (accompanied by visual symbols where relevant) of how disclosures are escalated within your school/setting, that can be used with students if the situation arises, ensuring they feel part of the reporting process.

Thrive Online

Barriers to reporting

Young people face a number of barriers that might prevent them from talking to an adult about things which have worried them online. For those with SEND, these barriers can be even greater and harder to overcome.

Some of these things young people have shared are:

- "I don't have the means to tell you"
- "I'll get called a snitch"
- "You'll take my tech"
- "I didn't realise it was a problem"
- "I don't want to get into trouble"
- "It's embarrassing"
- "I don't know what happens next"

Consider how you can minimise these barriers to ensure young people feel safe and supported in discussing their online experiences.

Online behaviours and the law

Some online incidents can break the law. Context is key in every situation, and it is crucial this is taken into consideration when responding. If involved, the police should determine the response on a case by case basis and should take into account a person's vulnerability, especially if they have been exploited or coerced.

There are a number of laws which cover how people speak to each other in both the real world and online. They are:

▶ Communications Act 2003: This Act covers all forms and types of public communication. With regards to online behaviour, it covers the sending of grossly offensive, obscene, menacing or indecent communications and any communication that causes needless anxiety or contains false accusation.

▶ Protection from Harassment Act 1997: This Act covers any form of harassment that has occurred 'repeatedly.' In this instance, 'repeatedly' means on more than two occasions.

▶ The Malicious Communications Act 1988: This Act covers the sending of grossly offensive or threatening letters, electronic communications or any other form of message with the intention of causing harm, distress or anxiety.

▶ Equality Act 2010: This Act states that it is against the law to discriminate against anyone on the ground of protected characteristics. These include disability, gender reassignment (when a person undergoes a process, or part of a process – social or medical – for the purpose of reassigning their sex), race (including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin), religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

There are a number of laws which cover illegal online content. They are:

▶ The Computer Misuse Act 1990: This Act criminalises the impersonation or theft of someone else's identity online. For example, this would mean that posting on social media pretending to be your friend would technically be against the law.

▶ Sexual Offences Act 2003: This Act covers the prevention and protection of children from harm due to sexual offences. The term 'sexual offences' describes offences including, but not limited to, rape, sexual assault, causing sexual activity without consent, child sex offences including grooming, abuse of position of trust, offences against persons with a mental disorder impeding choice, voyeurism offences including recording sexually intrusive images under someone's clothing, and indecent photographs of children.

▶ The Protection of Children Act 1978: This Act criminalises the taking, creating, showing, distributing, possessing with a view to distributing, and publishing any advertisement of indecent photographs of children (people under the age of 18).

▶ Criminal Justice Act 1988: This Act makes the possession of indecent photographs of children (under 18) a criminal offence.

▶ Section 33 of the Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015 criminalises the sharing of private, sexual photographs or films of adults without their consent, with the intent to cause distress.

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