



SAFEGUARDING NEWSLETTER

Relationships

Good education on the subject of relationships leaves young people better equipped to negotiate issues such as conflict and consent and are less likely to be vulnerable to abusive situations. It's natural for children and teenagers to be curious about sex and relationships as they grow older. But for some parents and carers, their child starting a new relationship or to have sex can also be a worrying time. More young people are also starting relationships online, or use things like social media or [video apps](#) to communicate with their partners.



You may feel anxious that your child's growing up too fast or be worried about their safety. We have advice to help you understand the difference between healthy and unhealthy relationships, and on what you can do to support your child.

Young people need to learn about relationships just like subjects in order to feel confident and be able to distinguish between healthy and harmful relationships.

How to talk to your child about relationships

Many parents or carers may feel awkward or uncomfortable talking to their child about relationships and sex. But there are ways you can make the conversation easier:

- Try to find a good time to start a conversation. Pick a time when your child's relaxed and when there aren't other people in your family around. You might want to have the conversation in a neutral place, such as on a walk or a bike ride, or even in the car, rather than somewhere at home where you might be interrupted.
- It can help to make the conversation relevant to something that's happened recently. For example, if you've been watching a TV series or film where one of the characters is in a relationship. You could ask your child what they think about the character's relationship and if it's healthy or unhealthy. Or if your child's been learning about sex and relationships education in school, you could ask them how they're finding this or what everyone in the class thought about it.
- Try not to rush the conversation and let your child talk to you in their own time. It can help to have several short conversations rather than trying to cover everything at once. If your child feels uncomfortable, let them know that you're there if they want to talk to you about relationships at a different time.

Support if you're worried about your child's relationship

Realising that your child may be involved in an unhealthy relationship can be upsetting and worrying for parents & carers. It can also be difficult to know if something's wrong or how to help them. We can help you spot the signs of an unhealthy relationship and know what to do if you're worried.

Signs that a child might be in an unhealthy relationship are:

- Becoming isolated and spending little time with family or friends.
- Controlling behaviour, such as being told what to wear, always needing to let the person know where they are or what they're doing or having their social media accounts monitored.
- Feeling pressured or like they have to do things they're uncomfortable with. This could include being pressured into sex or to [send nudes or sexual images](#).
- Having their money, access to food or day-to-day items controlled.
- Being prevented from working or going to school or college or feeling reluctant to go to school.
- Persistent changes to a child's mood or behaviour can also be a sign that something's wrong.
- Being [bullied](#) or experiencing sexual bullying, either online, in private or in front of others at home or in school.

If you're worried your child might be experiencing [grooming](#), [sexual](#), [emotional](#) or [physical abuse](#), it's important to get help right away. [NSPCC](#) have trained counsellors who can offer support and advice over the telephone on 0808 800 5000 or [online](#).

There are other support mechanisms available to children, parents & carers at the end of the newsletter.

If you're worried about a child:

 **0808 800 5000**
 **help@nspcc.org.uk**
 **www.nspcc.org.uk**



Talking to your child about consent

It's important for parents and carers to talk to their children about sex and relationships to help keep them safe and recognise the [signs of abuse](#). We have advice to help you start the conversation below. It can also help to speak to teachers at your child's school about the kinds of topics being covered in relationships & sex education classes and discuss how you could add to this at home. When talking to your child about sex and relationships, it's really important that you help them to feel supported by listening openly and non-judgementally. Let them know that they can talk to you if anything inappropriate or that's upset them has happened, whatever the circumstances. And that it's never their fault if it has.

- * Start talking early
- * Talk to them about safe sex
- * Talk to them about consent and the law



The law

The age of consent, or the legal age to have sex in the UK, is 16. The laws are there to protect children and not to prosecute young people themselves.

However, as any sort of sexual contact without consent is illegal, regardless of the age of those involved. Children under 13 cannot legally consent to any sexual activity.

5 facts about consent:

- Consent is more than just saying yes or no
- Wanting to do something once doesn't mean you have to in the future
- Consent applies to anything sexual, not just sexual intercourse
- Being in a relationship doesn't mean you have to do what your partner wants
- You can change your mind about what's happening any time

Talk to them about safe sex

Encourage your child to make safe choices about sex. As children get older, it's important to talk about:

- sexually transmitted infections (STIs)
- contraception

Children are generally taught these topics in secondary school, so it's helpful to know they can talk about them with you too. Let them know you're there for them if they have questions or concerns.

Childline has advice for young people about [pregnancy](#), [STIs](#), [contraception](#), and [safe sex](#).

Resources & Support

Childline—relationship support for young people

Being in a relationship can be really exciting. Getting to know someone, hanging out and feeling happy just thinking about them. But it can also be confusing. Here is some advice for young people:

<https://www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/friends-relationships-sex/sex-relationships/relationships/>

Brook

Brook is an organisation that helps children and young people develop to be individuals and be themselves. They have many resources that parents and children can use about relationships and the wider context. <https://www.brook.org.uk/>



Useful places to go for information for your child:

Samaritans: 116 123

Childline: 0800 1111

Young Minds: 0808 802 5544

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/>

<https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/>

<https://www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre/>

<https://youngminds.org.uk/>

<https://www.kooth.com/>

