



IT DOES MATTER

**Tackling Violence Against
Women and Girls**

TEACHERS GUIDANCE AND LESSON PLAN



TEACHER GUIDANCE

This guidance and accompanying lesson plan have been developed to support teachers in delivering lessons that reinforce key messages around the prevention of Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG). Aimed at students in Key Stages 4–5, the lesson supports young people as they develop greater independence and are more likely to spend time out at night. It focuses on building awareness, promoting shared responsibility, and encouraging young people to look out for one another’s safety. The focus for pupils is on:

1. If you are a victim of or witness an offence, report it.
2. Be aware of potentially dangerous situations and understand the positive actions you can take to keep you and your friends safe.
3. If you see a potentially dangerous scenario unfold, recognise when it is safe to intervene. Ultimately, look out for each other in potentially dangerous scenarios.

Please read this guidance before teaching the lessons.

Trigger Warning: This lesson and its materials discuss topics related to violence against women and girls, including sexual offences, harassment, and personal safety.

Some content references real-life cases and may include descriptions of distressing events. These topics can be emotionally challenging, especially for those who have personal experience with similar issues.

INTRODUCTION - LIBBY'S STORY

Lisa Squire is the Chair of Trustees of It Does Matter, and Libby's mum. She has bravely shared the story of her daughter, Libby Squire, who was raped and murdered in 2019 by a violent male predator. Through her advocacy she supports meaningful conversations about safety, accountability and the reporting of sexual harm, particularly for young women and girls.

Libby was a 21 year-old student studying at the University of Hull when she went missing after a night out with friends on 31st January 2019. She was separated from friends when denied entry into a nightclub and went home in a taxi but never made it home. CCTV footage of the area shows that Libby was dropped off near her home, but cold and confused, she began wandering the streets. Several members of the public saw and interacted with Libby that night, but no one helped her safely home.

Her attacker, Pawel Relowicz, was convicted in February 2021 of raping and murdering Libby and sentenced to life in prison. He was ordered to serve a minimum of 27 years before he is eligible for parole. When arrested, Relowicz's DNA was found to be a match for several unsolved non-contact sexual offences in and around the student areas of Hull.

Lisa explains: "Libby's death was another in a long line of male sexual violence against women and girls. There were many points that night that could have changed the outcome for Libby, not least the reporting of non-contact sexual offences. It is unrealistic to expect the police to catch the offender immediately that night, but what reporting does do is enable the police to record the offences, join the dots and act upon any increased incidences of non-contact sexual offences. As women, we are conditioned to accept these acts of intimidation - we should not accept such behaviour. We need to act now to stop these offenders and to make the streets of the UK a safer place for women and girls."

INTRODUCTION

What is Violence Against Women and Girls?

Violence against women and girls (VAWG) is defined by the UK Government as any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women and girls. This includes threats of such acts, coercion or the arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life. VAWG encompasses a wide range of crimes, including domestic abuse, stalking and harassment, sexual offences and rape.

While men and boys can also experience these forms of abuse, the impact is disproportionate. Women and girls are significantly more likely to be affected by sexual violence, domestic abuse and coercive control. In the UK, a woman is killed by a man on average every three days, with the majority of these deaths occurring in a domestic context.

The scale of VAWG is reflected in national crime data. Violence against women and girls accounts for nearly **20% of all recorded crime in England and Wales**. In the year ending March 2025, police recorded **over 100,000 rape and serious sexual offences**, while survey data suggests that sexual violence remains vastly under-reported.

Addressing VAWG is now recognised as a **national priority**. In December 2025, the UK Government published *Freedom from violence and abuse: a cross-government strategy to build a safer society for women and girls, setting out a ten-year ambition to halve violence against women and girls*. The strategy emphasises prevention through education, early intervention, challenging harmful attitudes, bearing down on perpetrators, and improving support for victims and survivors. Tackling VAWG is positioned as the responsibility of society as a whole, including education, health, communities, and public services, not solely the criminal justice system

References

UK Government – Freedom from violence and abuse: a cross-government strategy (Dec 2025)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/freedom-from-violence-and-abuse-a-cross-government-strategy>

End Violence Against Women Coalition – overview of the strategy

<https://www.endviolenceagainstwomen.org.uk/governments-landmark-vawg-strategy-published/>

Office for National Statistics – sexual offences in England and Wales (YE March 2025)

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/bulletins/sexualoffencesinenglandandwalesoverview/yearendingmarch2025>

Developing the lesson

NB: In line with best practice, the accompanying lesson draws on what can be learned from Libby's story and the educational aims of the campaign. However, it does not directly teach students about the events surrounding Libby's death, which could be emotionally distressing for students in the PSHE classroom.

This lesson specifically focuses on teaching young people about non-contact sexual offences that can occur in public spaces, as young people develop their independence and are more likely to be out at night or alone. Development of this lesson has been informed by focus groups run with our target audience; young people aged 14-16. Their responses to the aims, ambition and design of the campaign have informed both the campaign materials and the development of discussion points within the lesson. We would like to thank all the young people who took part for their insight and engagement.

The lesson plan is intended to be delivered in a one-hour timetabled lesson, as part of a broader PSHE curriculum. Timings provided are for guidance only and can be adapted based on the needs and interests of your students. It may be necessary to extend the lesson if the activities have prompted long and meaningful discussion on this topic. Suggestions have been provided to extend learning beyond the lesson, as well as ways to adapt the main activities to provide greater support or greater challenges for those who may need it.

CREATING A SAFE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

A safe learning environment helps students feel comfortable sharing their ideas and opinions without attracting negative feedback, and will help teachers manage discussions on sensitive issues confidently. It is good practice for teachers to:

- work with students to establish ground rules about how they will behave in discussion, such as:
 - everyone has the right to be heard and respected;
 - we will use language that won't offend or upset other people;
 - we won't judge or make assumptions about anyone, their feelings, or experiences;
 - we will comment on what was said, not the person who said it;
 - we won't share our own personal experiences or those of anyone we know;
 - we won't put anyone on the spot and have a right to pass.
- offer opportunities for students to discuss in small groups as well as sharing views with the class;
- make a box/envelope available for students to put questions or concerns in (anonymously if they wish) to avoid having to voice them in front of the class;
- provide factually accurate, up-to-date information;
- be sensitive to the needs and experiences of individuals; some may have direct experience of VAWG;
- use distancing strategies to discourage personal disclosures in the classroom, allow students to explore topics objectively, and keep the learning environment safe;
- always work within the school's policies on safeguarding and confidentiality;
- link PSHE education into the whole school approach to supporting student wellbeing;
- make students aware of sources of support, both in and outside the school.

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

CREATING A SAFE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Safeguarding and supporting students with additional vulnerabilities

This lesson may prompt an increase in disclosures of incidents involving violence against women and girls among your students. Prior to teaching, it is important to:

- Ensure reporting systems in school are varied and robust; for example – do students know who they can speak to at any time of the school day, if they have a concern? Are there opportunities to report concerns anonymously or through other channels than face-to-face discussions? Have the safeguarding and pastoral team been made aware that students may be seeking support following the lesson?
- If disclosures are made directly to you (during or after the lesson), report any concerns raised as soon as possible to your Designated Safeguarding Lead, in line with your school's child protection and safeguarding policies. Ensure your teaching team is prepared to manage disclosures also.
- Make students aware of the topic before teaching. This will enable them to prepare for the lesson and to speak to a member of staff in advance if they have been personally affected by the issue. If you are aware of any students who have been personally affected, provide additional support for them, such as exit passes and an alternative safe place to go if they are unable to stay in the lesson.

Signposting support for students

Ensure students are made aware of sources of support available to them, both in and outside of school. You may choose to highlight the following websites:

- Childline www.childline.org.uk – for general wellbeing support.
- Victim support www.victimsupport.org.uk – for anyone who has been the target of a crime.
- CEOP www.ceop.police.uk – for anyone who has been the target of online sexual abuse.
- www.police.uk – to report crimes via an online form rather than phone call.

Support for teachers

To find out more about VAWG strategy, visit:

- Home Office VAWG strategy - www.gov.uk/government/publications/tackling-violence-against-women-and-girls-strategy
- National Police Chief's Council - www.npcc.police.uk/our-work/violence-against-women-and-girls
- Thames Valley Police VAWG strategy: www.thamesvalley.police.uk/SysSiteAssets/media/downloads/thames-valley/vawg/tvp-violence-against-women-and-girls-strategy.pdf

Curriculum links: Relationships, Sex and Health Education

The table below outlines the learning objective and outcomes of the lesson plan, and how this can support meeting the learning opportunities in the [PSHE Association Programme of Study](#) and the Department for Education’s statutory [Relationships, Sex and Health Education \(RSHE\) guidance](#).

No lesson should be taught in isolation, but should always form part of a planned, spiral PSHE curriculum. This lesson would work well embedded as part of wider learning about healthy and unhealthy relationships, or learning about personal safety as young people become more independent.

LEARNING OBJECTIVE AND OUTCOMES	PSHE ASSOCIATION PROGRAMME OF STUDY	DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION RSHE STATUTORY GUIDANCE
<p>Learning objective: To learn about strategies to support personal safety, especially when out socialising with peers.</p> <p>Learning outcomes: Students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify situations where people may feel unsafe when out socialising Evaluate strategies to support personal safety for each other Analyse the effect of attitudes towards personal safety and violence against women and girls 	<p>Key stage 4</p> <p>Harmful relationship behaviours</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> about the impact of victim-blaming, and ways to challenge victim-blaming attitudes what constitutes sexual harassment (including non-contact sexual offences), violence and assault, (including rape), the law relating to these and the impact of misconceptions about them <p>Personal safety, risk and influence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> to evaluate ways in which their behaviours may influence their peers both positively and negatively; the role peers can play in supporting one another to resist pressure, to challenge harmful social norms, and to minimise risk or harm, especially on social media <p>Key stage 5</p> <p>Harmful sexual behaviours</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> rights and legal protections in relation to unwanted attention, obsessive behaviours, non-contact sexual offences, harassment, stalking, sexual assault, and rape; the emotional, physical, social and legal consequences of these ways to safely intervene if witnessing harmful sexual behaviours, and how to report and access support for self or others <p>Managing risk and personal safety</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> to assess risk in a wide range of contexts; how to manage risks, including de-escalating or exiting unsafe situation 	<p>Respectful relationships:</p> <p>(2) How to evaluate their impact on other people and treat others with kindness and respect, including in public spaces and including strangers. Pupils should understand the legal rights and responsibilities regarding equality, and that everyone is unique and equal.</p> <p>(10) How inequalities of power can impact behaviour within relationships, including sexual relationships. For example, how people who are disempowered can feel they are not entitled to be treated with respect by others or how those who enjoy an unequal amount of power might, with or without realising it, impose their preferences on others.</p> <p>Being safe:</p> <p>(4) How to increase their personal safety in public spaces, including when socialising with friends, family, the wider community or strangers. Pupils should learn ways of seeking help when needed and how to report harmful behaviour. Pupils should understand that there are strategies they can use to increase their safety, and that this does not mean they will be blamed if they are victims of harmful behaviour. Pupils might reflect on the importance of trusting their instincts when something doesn’t feel right, and should understand that in some situations a person might appear trustworthy but have harmful intentions.</p> <p>(5) What constitutes sexual harassment or sexual violence, and that such behaviour is unacceptable, emphasising that it is never the fault of the person experiencing it.</p> <p>(8) The concepts and laws relating to harmful sexual behaviour, which includes all types of sexual harassment and sexual violence among young people but also includes other forms of concerning behaviour like using age-inappropriate sexual language.</p>

LESSON PLAN: LOOKING OUT FOR EACH OTHER

Lesson objective

To learn about strategies to support personal safety, especially when out socialising with peers.

Learning outcomes

Students will be able to:

- identify situations where people may feel unsafe when out socialising
- evaluate how to support personal safety for each other
- assess how attitudes can influence the actions someone might take in response to gender-based violence

Resources required

- Box or envelope for questions
- A3 paper
- Resource 1: Scenarios (1 scenario per group)
- Resource 2: Thoughts and Feelings (optional support – as needed)
- Resource 3: Then and Now (1 per student)

ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION	TIMING (TOTAL: 60 MINS)
1. Introduction	Introduce the learning objective and outcomes, establish ground rules and make students aware of the question box.	5 mins
2. Baseline assessment	Students demonstrate their initial ideas by evaluating the level of safety in a series of scenarios.	10 mins
3. What makes it unsafe?	In pairs, students create a list of factors that may make social situations unsafe.	5 mins
4. What could they do?	In groups, students suggest a range of strategies young people could choose in response to unsafe situations.	15 mins
5. What prevents us?	Students reflect on what might prevent young people from making safe choices, and how to tackle this.	10 mins
6. Endpoint assessment & reflection	Students assess how their confidence in managing unsafe situations has grown over the lesson and reflect on how their learning might affect their behaviour in the future.	10 mins
7. Signpost support	Remind students of the importance of keeping themselves and their peers safe. Highlight sources of support and how to report.	5 mins

<p>CLIMATE FOR LEARNING</p>	<p>This topic may be upsetting for students who are aware of or have their own experiences of violence against women and girls. The aim of the lesson is not to cause undue distress to young people, or to create any sense of blame towards those who have experienced unsafe situations. Women and girls have a right to feel, and be safe when socialising with friends. However, there are opportunities all young people can take to help increase their own personal safety, and that of their peers. This lesson intends to empower young people by exploring these strategies.</p> <p>Please read the teacher guidance first, which outlines the background of the Violence Against Women and Girls campaign, and ways to approach teaching this sensitive topic safely and effectively. Guidance includes establishing ground rules, safeguarding protocols and sources of support to signpost.</p>
<p>KEY WORDS</p>	<p>Personal safety, VAWG, non-contact sexual offences</p>
<p>BASELINE ASSESSMENT</p>	<p>Introduction (slides 3-4) 5 mins</p> <p>Use slide 3 to establish ground rules with the class, including any particularly relevant to this lesson, such as not making assumptions about anyone and not sharing personal stories. Highlight the question box, where students can submit written questions (either anonymously or with their name), at any point during the lesson.</p> <p>Introduce the learning objective and outcomes, explaining that today’s lesson will explore how young people can help to tackle violence against women and girls by supporting one another’s personal safety.</p> <p>Baseline assessment activity (slide 5) 10 mins</p> <p>Present students with a brief list of scenarios (on slide 5) and ask them to decide in each case whether they consider them to be ‘safe’ or ‘unsafe’. Once they have decided, they should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • write in their books the order of the scenarios from least to most safe, justifying their reasons for the least safe scenario • for anything they have labelled ‘unsafe’, suggest something the person might do to help make the scenario safer <p>Take feedback as a whole class, noting any similarities or differences in the students’ views. This will help you gauge their current understanding and attitudes about personal safety but may identify misconceptions, stereotypical thinking or gaps in knowledge which can be addressed in the lesson.</p>
<p>CORE ACTIVITIES</p>	<p>What makes it unsafe? (slide 6) 5 mins</p> <p>Building on the previous activity, ask students to pair up and compare their initial ideas. Looking at the scenarios, ask them to think about young people who are likely to be out socialising, and to create a list of key factors that might make these social situations less safe.</p> <p>Take feedback. Students might suggest: being alone, being with people they don’t trust or know well, being intoxicated, no one else knowing where they are, time of day, how public the place is etc.</p> <p>If it hasn’t already been raised, ask: Is this different depending on the person’s culture or gender?</p>

CORE ACTIVITIES

Students may have different views about the different aspects of this question but are likely to recognise that women and girls may feel (and be) less safe when out alone at night. Some students may express that cultural norms and expectations affect perceptions of safety; for example, in focus groups led by Thames Valley, girls from some cultural backgrounds expressed fewer concerns about safety as they were less likely to be out socialising with males alone. Male students in our focus groups also did not always recognise the increased level of risk or fear expressed by female students; this could be a key opportunity for them to hear and learn from the experiences of their female peers.

The risks may also be different for male and female students; for example, while male students may express concerns about gang-related crime or violence, female students are more likely to have concerns about sexual offences, harassment or violence.

What could they do? (slides 7-12)

15 mins

Organise students into small groups and give them one of the scenarios from Resource 1: Scenarios. They should stick this in the centre of a large A3 page. Ask them to write around the scenario as many possible things the character in their scenario could do. Challenge them to identify at least five strategies. Take feedback as a class and collate a wide range of strategies on the board, using slides 8-11 to support discussion.

NB: While it is unclear the causes or consequences of some of the scenarios, use this discussion time to highlight to the class that Isla and her friends have experienced a crime known as a non-contact sexual offence. This means a sexual offence carried out without physical contact, such as exposing genitals or masturbating in public.

Following this, ask the groups to identify possible consequences and add these to each of the actions the character might take; what do they think will happen next? Finally, considering all the strategies and their possible consequences, ask groups to select which they think would be the safest choice for the character to make and give their rationale for their decision.

Support: Ask the groups to think of a single consequence for each action the character might take.

Challenge: Encourage the groups to think of at least three possible consequences for each strategy they have suggested, and then identify which of these consequences they think is the most likely.

What prevents us? (slides 13-14)

10 mins

Ask the groups to briefly discuss and agree on which action they think is the most likely that their character might take and gather feedback. Compare if this is the same or different to the action they identified as the safest. It is likely that in many cases, the most likely action is not the one they have deemed the safest. With this in mind, ask them to work in groups to think about what might prevent the characters from acting in the safest way for themselves or for the other person. Specifically, they might think about:

- the thoughts and feelings of the characters in the moment
- societal norms or stereotypes that may prevent them from acting safely

CORE ACTIVITIES

Students are likely to suggest ideas such as:

- *Thoughts and feelings: I don't want to miss the fun, It's not my business, There's nothing I can do, I don't want people to think I'm trying it on with her, I don't know how they're going to react, I've got to look out for myself.*
- *Societal norms or stereotypes: It's her fault for being drunk, This is just what happens, Girls aren't safe out alone, A man approaching a woman alone must want something, The police don't do anything about low-level offences.*

Take feedback and ask each group to select one of the factors that might prevent someone from making the safest choice and write a response combatting this view. For example, for the thought: "I don't want to miss the fun", the response might include: "There are plenty of opportunities to go out another time, safety is more important than having fun this one time, looking after your friend doesn't mean the fun has to stop - there could be a way to achieve both."

If time allows, share these back with the whole class. Whilst it is important to combat all stereotypes and misconceptions related to personal safety, use slide 14 to emphasise the importance of reporting non-contact sexual offences. Although they may not seem to make a difference in the short term, these reports can build a picture that helps the police make arrests and prevent would-be offenders from committing more serious crimes in the future.

Support: Provide students with Resource 2: Thoughts and Feelings, and ask them to select those they think are relevant to their character. They can then match these up with the possible responses.

Challenge: Ask students to identify any other factors (beyond thoughts, feelings and societal norms) that might make it hard for someone to make safe choices when socialising e.g. being intoxicated, peer pressure, etc.

Reflection and endpoint assessment (slide 15)

10 mins

Ask students to self-assess their learning by completing Resource 3: Then and Now, which compares their confidence in their ability to respond to the learning outcomes at the start of the lesson compared to now. Ask them to select the outcome where there has been the biggest increase in confidence and explain why this has changed, or use an example to demonstrate their learning.

Finally, ask students to individually reflect on something they might do differently next time they are out socialising with their friends and add this to Resource 3. Is there something they might aim to do next time? How might this help to improve their own or others' safety? As this is a personal reflection, they do not need to share this with the class.

Review the question box and respond to any submitted questions or (if you need more time to prepare an answer) let students know you will respond to them in the next lesson.

PLENARY / ASSESSMENT FOR AND OF LEARNING

PLENARY / ASSESSMENT FOR AND OF LEARNING

Signposting support (slide 16)

5 mins

Using slide 16, remind students that they cannot be responsible for everyone's safety all of the time. However, by trying to make safe choices, noticing when their peers may be unsafe and how to support them, and reporting inappropriate behaviour from others, we can all make the world a little bit safer. Something we do that might seem small could be the action that prevents a woman or girl from experiencing violence against her.

Remind students where they can access further support or report a crime:

- At home, or in school by speaking to their tutor, head of year or the safeguarding lead
- Contacting Childline www.childline.org.uk
- Contacting Victim Support www.victimsupport.org.uk
- Reporting a non-urgent crime using 101 or through an online form at www.police.uk
- In an emergency, calling 999
- Reporting crime anonymously using www.fearless.org.uk

EXTENSION ACTIVITY

Extension Activity (slide 17)

Ask students to work together to create an in-school campaign based on the learning from this lesson. It should focus on strategies to maintain personal safety when socialising and could take the form of:

- a poster campaign for display in school corridors
- an assembly or tutor time presentation



If something happens to you that makes you feel unsafe, uncomfortable or harmed, **it is not your fault**. Abuse and violence are never okay, and no one ever deserves it.

You are not alone, and help is available.

If you or someone you know is affected, we encourage you to visit our website for information, reporting advice and support.

Your voice also matters. By sharing your thoughts on this lesson, you help shape education that protects young people and promotes safety for everyone.