

Friends, family and relationships

Who are you?	85
Families	86
Culture and religion	88
Racism	90
Positive relationships	91
Communication	93
Unhealthy relationships	95
Sexual identity	98
Sexual relationships	99
Rape and sexual assault	100
Harmful traditional practices	102
Child sexual abuse	104

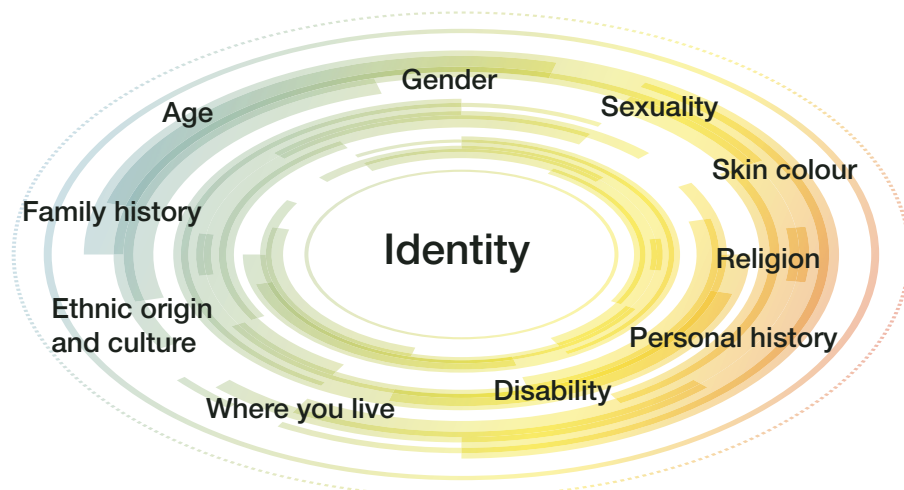


Who are you?

Your identity – who you are – is made up of lots of different things.

Lots of people will share aspects of your identity – skin colour, race, gender, sexuality, culture, religion. But there is only one of you – you are unique and you should be proud of who you are.

If you ever feel bad about yourself, ask someone who knows you well to remind you about all the good things about you.



Or write them down for yourself.

- Make a list of all the things you like about yourself or you are good at.
- Now write down all the things friends, family, colleagues at work or college, other people who know you have said they like about you. Ask them if you can't remember.
- Now write down all the things you have achieved in the past six months, however small they may seem. For example, it could be getting to college every day, getting (and keeping) a job, learning a new sport, making a new friend, taking up a new hobby or interest, helping a friend move house, finishing a course – or just getting through a difficult time.
- These are all things that go to boost your self-esteem – your belief that you're an okay person (and no one's perfect).



respect



Families

Families are a central part of some people's lives. Some people live near their parents, even when they have grown up and left home to have their own family.

Other people move away when they grow up and see very little of their birth parents and other relatives.

Adopted children

Some people do not grow up with their birth parents, either because they are adopted or because they are taken into local authority care because of fears for their safety and well-being. If a child is adopted, the court may decide that it is not in their best interests to have face-face contact with their birth parents.

When they are 18, adopted children can apply to the adoption agency that arranged their adoption for a copy of their original birth certificate and for information about their birth family. Birth family members can also apply to the Registrar General to have their names placed on the Adoption Contact Register so their child knows they are willing to be contacted.

Some adopted children have contact with their birth family by letter ('letter box' contact), or see them at set times – once a year, for example.

Family relationships often change and develop as we get older. Sometimes they go through bad patches and sometimes they get stronger.

The amount of contact we have with our families can change too. You may move to another part of the country and lose touch with some family members. You may have very good reasons for not having contact with your family, or particular members of your family.

That can be painful, but right for you.

You don't have to live with your family, or even nearby, to stay in touch. You don't even have to be in touch with them regularly – some people rarely contact their family but it isn't a problem. They all know how to contact each other if needed. They just know they are all leading their own, separate and maybe very different lives.

It is for you to decide what is right for you in terms of contact and how often you see members of your family.

In some cases contact may not be possible.

- If you are subject of a care order or other legal order, your contact with your birth parents may have been restricted for your safety and well-being.
- You may have younger siblings who are the subject of care orders or adoption orders and the Courts have ruled that you can have limited contact (eg. letter box contact).
- If you are adopted you will need to take advice about your right to contact your birth family. You may find it helpful to get counselling and advice before making the decision.



You can get more information about your legal rights in relation to your family at:

www.yourrights.org.uk

Your social worker will also be able to advise you about all these things.

Refugees/asylum seekers

Some young people are asylum seekers or refugees and will have lost contact with their family or may not know where they are or even if they are still alive.

There are special support agencies and groups for young asylum seekers and refugees, where you can get advice and information and also help to cope with emotional and mental health difficulties.

www.smileproject.org.uk

This is a children and young people's project within the Refugee Council, which also offers advice, information and help.

www.refugeecouncil.org.uk

This is the biggest refugee organisation in the UK. It provides support and advice to asylum seekers and refugees in London, the East of England, West Midlands and Yorkshire and Humberside.

www.refugeetherapy.org.uk

This organisation provides counselling and psychotherapy and other help to children, adolescents and young refugees and asylum seekers and their families.

See also Section 5: Your Rights and Responsibilities



Culture and religion

Your culture is an important part of your identity. Your culture is made up from a lot of different things to do with how you live – what food you eat, your language, the customs and beliefs you hold, your religion/faith.

A lot of this comes from your family – whether that's your birth family or a family you grew up with. Your culture is also linked very closely to your race. White British people tend to have very different customs and behaviours to Black African Caribbean (British) people, even if they live just a few streets away.

If you live in an area where there are a lot of people who share your culture and religion, the people around you – your community – will have a strong influence on your lifestyle, how you behave and how you view the world.

There are other kinds of community that aren't about a shared race or religion. People belonging to these communities may not even live geographically close to each other. These are sometimes called 'communities of interest' and form around a shared lifestyle or belief system.

Your culture is important, but it doesn't mean you can't have friends from other cultures, races and communities. Increasingly, people identify with more than one culture, because their parents are from different cultures.

People have always brought aspects of their own culture when they come to a new country, and these have been absorbed into the mainstream culture. That's why you can eat pizza (Italian), burgers (American), sweet and sour pork (Chinese), kebabs (Greek) or curry (Indian, Pakistani) pretty much anywhere in the UK today. The UK is a multi-cultural society, especially in its big cities.

Religion/faith/belief

People in the UK follow a lot of different religions. Mostly their religion is related to their culture or race, although some people adopt religions that are associated with other cultures.

There are a lot of different religions practised in the UK. They include:

- Christianity
- Judaism
- Catholicism
- Sikhism
- Protestantism
- Rastafarianism
- Buddhism
- Hinduism
- Islam (Muslim)
- Paganism
- Humanism.

Some people are atheists – they do not believe in any kind of god.

All religions expect certain customs and behaviours. For example:

- Islam, Judaism and Rastafarianism do not allow followers to eat pork
- Hinduism does not allow followers to eat beef
- Islam, Judaism and Sikhism have traditional forms of clothing to cover the head
- Islam and Rastafarianism forbid alcohol
- Buddhists, Hindus and Sikhs believe in reincarnation
- Christians, Jews, Muslims and Rastafarians believe in one god
- Buddhists do not believe in any god.

Even though these religions all have different belief systems and customs, they all share the basic principles of striving to lead a 'good' life and that we should treat others as we would like to be treated.



You can find out more about world religions from the internet. A useful source of information about all the different world religions is:

www.bbc.co.uk/religion

There are other kinds of belief systems that people believe in very strongly.

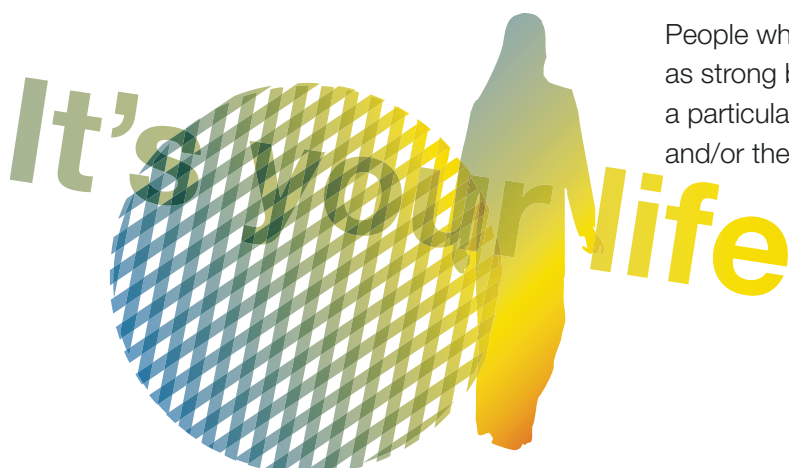
Some people hold very strong political beliefs – for example:

- Labour
- Conservatism
- Liberal Democracy
- Communism
- Socialism
- Anarchism
- Environmentalism (Green Party)
- Feminism.

Some organisations exist to promote the rights and interests of particular social groups – or animals:

- RSPCA (protection of animals)
www.rspca.org.uk
- Terrence Higgins Trust (people with HIV/AIDS)
www.tht.org.uk
- Amnesty International (political prisoners)
www.amnesty.org.uk
- Women's Aid (women and children at risk from domestic violence) **www.womensaid.org.uk**
- Greenpeace (environmental protection)
www.greenpeace.org.uk
- NSPCC (children at risk of harm)
www.nspcc.org.uk
- Mind (people with mental health problems)
www.mind.org.uk
- CAFOD (helping people in the developing world)
www.cafod.org.uk
- Mencap (people with learning disabilities)
www.mencap.org.uk
- Age UK (older people) **www.ageuk.org.uk**

People who support these organisations can have just as strong beliefs and ideologies as people who follow a particular religion. They too want to make society and/or the world a better place.



Racism

Racism is when someone is treated differently because of their race, the colour of their skin, their nationality, their accent or first language, or their ethnic or national origin. Racism is a hate crime, and is illegal.

Hate crime includes physical attacks and threat of attack, offensive graffiti, verbal abuse and bullying.

The police definition of a hate crime is: 'Any incident, which constitutes a criminal offence, which is perceived by the victim or any other person as being motivated by prejudice or hate.'

So if you think it's racism, then it's racism.

If you or someone you know is the victim of racism:

- don't retaliate – you could get hurt or even get into trouble with the police yourself
- report it – to an adult you trust
- go straight to the police – to a police station, or you can report a racist incident by phone or online.

Ring the Crimestoppers' anonymous information line on **0800 555 111** or you can report a crime anonymously online at **www.crimestoppers-uk.org**



A good website for young people about race and racism is: **www.britkid.org**

www.bbc.co.uk/radio1/advice is a really useful site with information about all the issues discussed in this section, including racism, relationships, bullying and lots more.



Some of the young people helped by Coram go on to volunteer with us

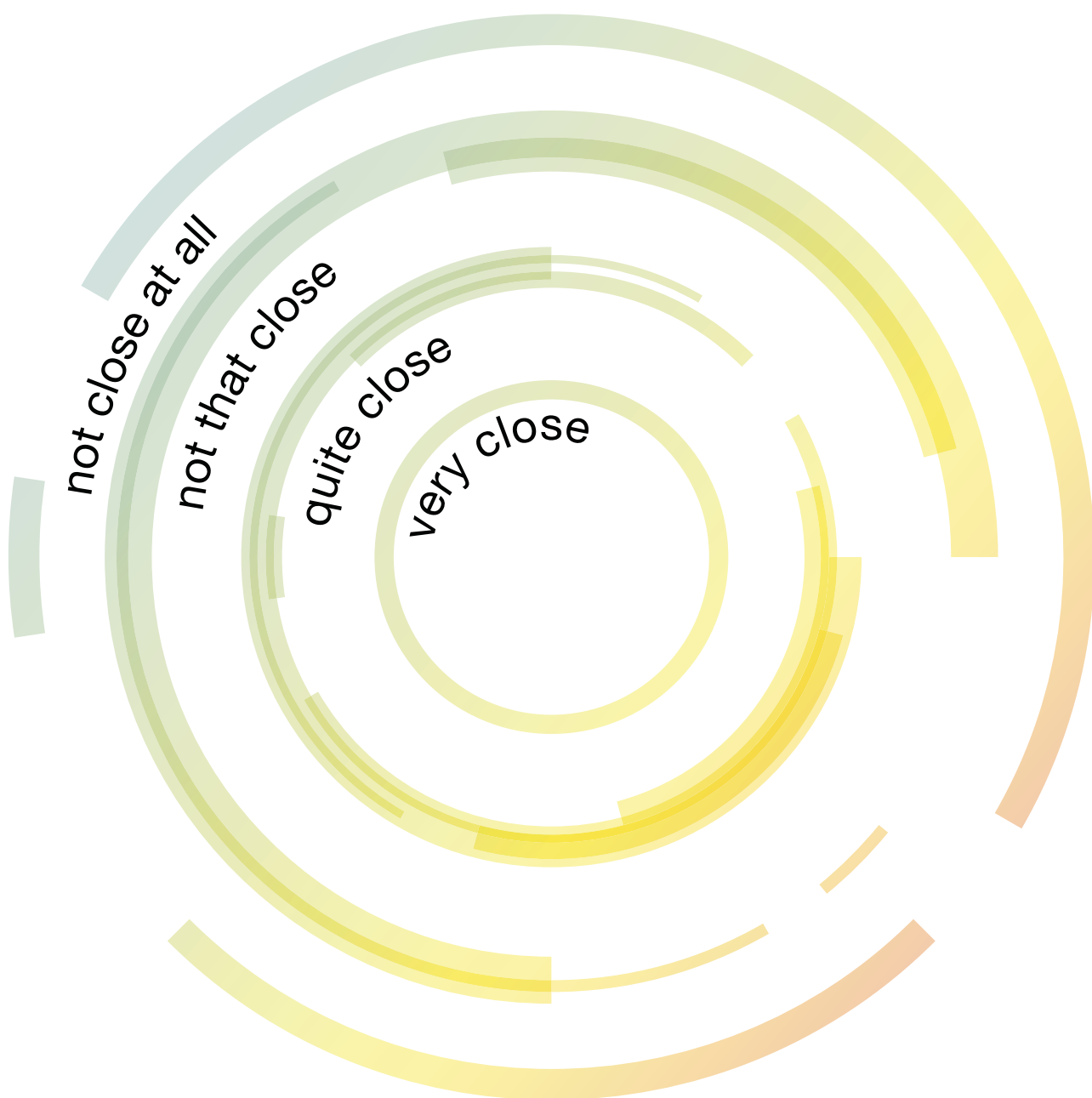
Positive relationships

We all have a lot of different relationships in our lives.

We have relationships with:

- friends
- family
- partners/boyfriends/girlfriends
- professionals (social worker, doctor etc)
- work/study colleagues.

These relationships are all very different and we behave differently depending on the relationship.





Good relationships are all about give and take.

- Think about what you expect from your friends.
- Think about what your friends expect from you.
 - Honesty.
 - Trust.
 - Respect.
 - There for you.
 - Support.
 - Understanding.
 - Forgiveness.
 - Help and advice.
 - Trust.
 - Love.
 - A listening ear.

A good friend will always try to be there for you when you need them. They accept you for who you are. They don't judge you (although they do tell you the truth, which may not always be easy to hear). They listen to you and give you advice if you ask for it. They respect you and your views, even if they don't always agree with them. They forgive you if you overstep the mark – provided you accept what you have done and apologise.

You'll be all these things for your friends too.

Making (and keeping) friends

- Respect your friends' needs and opinions, and be prepared to compromise.
- Agree to disagree – you may have very strong opinions about something – and so may your friends. It's better to agree to disagree and move on.
- Make up your own mind, but be willing to listen to other people's arguments – people will respect you for it.
- Don't allow yourself to be pressured into doing things you don't want to do just because 'everyone' else is doing them. Listen to yourself and what you want and know is right for you.
- If you're starting a new school, job or college course, don't worry that you'll be the only one who doesn't know anyone else. You'll find most of the others are feeling just the same – and they're probably thinking you're the confident one.
- Stay in touch – even if you can't see someone for a while. Maybe you or they have moved away – keep in contact on the phone or email. Good friends are important.

Best friends



Communication

Communication is a two-way process – it's about talking and also about listening. It's about how you express yourself, verbally and through body language, and how you listen.

It isn't just what you say; what you don't say and your body language are also important in relationships. That's whether you are talking to someone serving behind the counter at your local shop, the benefits office, or your best friend who has started going out with your ex.



Being assertive

It's important to be able to say what you think without becoming aggressive or defensive.



Think about some situations in which you need to make clear your feelings or what you want.

What do you think is the most effective way to make your views clear?

Scenario 1

Your friends want to stay out but it's late and you need to get home because you have an exam the next day.

Scenario 2

You've just bought a new CD player and it doesn't work. You take it back to the shop to ask for a refund.

Scenario 3

Your friends keep staying overnight and leaving your flat in a total mess.

Scenario 4

Your social worker wants you to take a flat in an area that you don't think is right for you.

Scenario 5

Your social worker thinks you are ready to leave your current placement and live independently in supported housing.

How to be assertive

- Use clear and confident body language.
- Show you are listening.
- Respect others.
- Respect and like yourself.
- Put across your point of view calmly.
- Accept negative comments.
- Decide what you want to say and make sure you say it.
- Treat others as equals.
- Expect to be treated as equal.



Non-verbal communication

About 60% of all communication is non-verbal. The messages our bodies give are just as important as the words we use.

Think about your body language – what the expression on your face, your movements and posture say in certain situations. The way you sit, walk and carry yourself communicates a load of information to other people.

Did you know that many facial expressions are universal? The facial expressions for happiness, sadness, anger, surprise, fear, and disgust are the same across lots of different cultures.

Some people make a lot of use of their hands when they speak – particularly when they are arguing or getting excited about something.

Gestures can be misinterpreted, or come across as accusing or threatening (pointing, shaking a fist, waving a finger in someone's face). Some gestures have very different meanings in other cultures, so be careful!

Eye contact can communicate a lot of things that aren't said. It's also important when you're in a conversation to look at the other person so you can see their response.

When we speak, other people 'read' our voices as well as listen to our words. Your tone of voice, for example, can make the same words communicate anger, sarcasm, amusement or affection.

We communicate a great deal through touch. How do you feel when someone gives you a warm bear hug? A pat on the head? A firm handshake or a limp one?

It can feel very uncomfortable if the person you are talking to is standing too close – it can feel as though they really are invading your space. But if you like the person, or they're your partner, you probably don't even notice. Be respectful of other people's space, just as you would like them to respect yours.



Unhealthy relationships

Not all relationships are good. Relationships with friends, family, partners and other people in our lives can sometimes be difficult, painful, or even harmful.

Peer pressure

Peer pressure is when your peers (that is, friends and people in your social group) influence each other.

It happens all the time and mostly it doesn't cause too much harm. Peer pressure is about things like fashion – you're wearing the 'wrong' trainers or jeans that other young people aren't wearing this year. Everyone wants to fit in with their friends and be accepted by their social group. But sometimes people feel forced to do things – drink alcohol, take drugs, smoke, take really dangerous risks, or have sex with someone – when they really don't want to.

Don't ever do something you don't want to do just to 'fit in'. People you respect will respect you more for knowing your own mind and sticking to your beliefs.

Bullying

Bullying is when one person, or a group of people, pick on someone and make their life a misery. It's a bit like peer pressure, only much more focused on one person. There are a lot of reasons for bullying. Often bullies will pick out someone who they think can't defend themselves and doesn't have a group of friends to protect them.

Bullying includes:

- calling you hurtful names
- making things up about you so you get into trouble or look stupid
- saying nasty things about you – how you look, what you wear– or your family
- physically hitting, pinching, biting, pushing and shoving
- taking things away from you
- damaging your belongings
- stealing your money
- taking your friends away from you
- posting cruel messages on the internet
- spreading rumours
- threats and intimidation
- making silent or abusive phone calls
- sending you offensive texts.

Bullies can also frighten and harass you so that you are scared to go out or to go to college or work because you want to avoid them.

Bullying happens a lot among children and young people but it can also happen when you're older.

In fact, bullies often have very little self-confidence themselves. They're actually quite insecure, and probably feel threatened by you – maybe you're better looking, funnier, brighter, and more popular than them – but that's not much comfort to know when it feels like they're in a stronger position than you. Sometimes people bully because they think it will make them look more impressive to their friends, so they pick on someone they think is weaker and more defenceless.



What can you do if you're being bullied?

One way of dealing with cruel remarks is simply to say 'Yeah, whatever'. If they don't get the response they want, the bully will probably give up.

If it's happening at college or work and is really upsetting you, you should talk to a member of staff or college counsellor, or to your workplace manager. If it's your manager who's bullying you, talk to their manager. Bullying at work is illegal. You could also contact your trade union representative, if there is one.

You could take up judo or martial arts classes so that you feel more confident that you can look after yourself if necessary. Remember, it is illegal to physically assault someone, so don't use physical violence unless you are being attacked.

Street gangs

Being part of a friendship group is a normal part of growing up. Most children and young people belong to some kind of 'gang' of friends who they hang around with and go out with.

'Street gangs' are not the same.

Young people join street gangs for a lot of different reasons:

- recognition
- respect
- power
- protection
- to get friends
- to be accepted
- for excitement
- for money from crime
- for a sense of belonging
- to defend their territory.

There can be a lot of pressure to join a gang, for all these reasons.

Street gangs aren't illegal, but their activities often are.

You will find yourself having to get involved in violence and crime, with a very real risk of serious harm and even getting killed. If you carry a weapon you are more likely to be victim of a weapon attack yourself. Carrying an unregistered gun is illegal, as is carrying a knife as an offensive weapon. Street gangs use violence against other gangs, and also against their own members, to control them. Young women are at

risk of sexual exploitation by more powerful gang members, and sexual violence (rape). There is often pressure on girls associated with young boys in gangs to 'link' with older, higher status gang members for their own protection.

Violent extremism

Some groups use violence for political or religious reasons. These groups include religious extremists and right wing political groups, and other extremist groups like animal rights activists. They believe that violence is an effective way to change society.

Sometimes young people are drawn into these groups by their family or through a local faith leader. They may feel that the group gives them a focus or an identity or a 'family' where they feel they belong.

These groups cause harm to other people, and put their members at very serious risk of imprisonment and even death if they use violence.



Cyber safety

New technology has opened up a whole lot of new ways to bully other people, via the internet and mobile phones.

There are new ways being devised all the time, so if you are being bullied or harassed on your mobile phone or via the internet, contact a bullying advice organisation like Bullying UK or ChildLine:

www.bullyinguk.co.uk

www.childline.org.uk

Bullying UK has lots of information about safe use of social networking sites and chat rooms and how to deal with cyber bullying and bullying and harassment via mobile phones.

Cyber safety tips

- Never give out your real name.
- Never tell anyone where you go to school/college/work.
- Never give out your address or telephone number.
- Never agree to meet anyone from a chat room on your own.
- Tell an adult you trust if someone makes inappropriate suggestions to you or makes you feel uncomfortable online.
- Never upload pictures that you wouldn't want thousands of other people to see.
- Never upload pictures of other people without their consent.
- Be very careful what you say – nothing is secret in cyber space and nothing can be permanently deleted. Something you write now might affect your whole life – many employers check the internet before they take people on.

If you ever come across anything on the internet, whether it's on a social networking website or anywhere else, where people are making suggestions to you that make you feel uncomfortable or upset, report it to CEOP.

CEOP (The Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre) investigates cases of sex abuse and grooming on the internet. You can report incidents by clicking the red button on the top right hand corner of the CEOP website at **www.ceop.gov.uk**

Although the police can get information from your computer's hard drive, it's helpful if you don't delete anything until the police have decided whether they need it as evidence.

Cyber safety works both ways.

If you post abuse about anyone else on the internet, or if you send threats in chat rooms or on instant messaging, or make threatening or abusive mobile phone calls, you can be traced by the police.



Sexual identity

Most people are heterosexual – that is, they are sexually attracted to people of the opposite sex.

Some people are bisexual – they are sexually attracted to both sexes.

Some men are gay, or homosexual – they are sexually attracted to other men.

Some women are gay, or lesbian – they are sexually attracted to other women.

Some people (men and women) feel they have been ‘born in the wrong body’, and choose to undergo medical treatment to change their gender. They are called transgender or transsexual people.

People who like to wear clothes that are more usually worn by the other sex are known as transvestites. They can be heterosexual or homosexual and may not necessarily feel they are born in the wrong body.

People’s sexual orientation can change over their lifetime. Heterosexual people sometimes leave their partner and form a new relationship with someone from the same sex. People who have been in same sex relationships can move into a heterosexual relationship.

Some people believe homosexuals are born with a same-sex sexual orientation; others believe it is a personal (or political) choice, or dependent on their upbringing and environment. Genetic research has yet to identify a ‘gay gene’, but most people would argue that, like all aspects of our identity, it is a combination of nature (genes) and nurture (upbringing).

Historically, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people have experienced a lot of discrimination and prejudice. It was illegal for a man to have sex with other men (but not for women to have sex with other women) up until 1967. It wasn’t until 2001 that the age of consent was set at 16 for everyone, regardless of their sexual orientation. Homosexuality was seen as a mental illness up until 1993.

Some homosexual people still keep their sexuality private, for fear of discrimination, particularly if they are in the public eye, such as politicians, film actors or sports stars. There is still a view that gay men are effeminate, and that lesbians are ‘butch’. This is a myth – there are a lot of straight men who have characteristics usually associated with women, and a lot of heterosexual women who are very good at traditionally male activities.

You don’t ‘find out’ that you’re lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender. These are just labels. You may feel sexually attracted to someone of your own sex, but it is up to you whether you want to take on the label. Labels are for parcels, not people.

Being lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender can be quite isolating if you are the only one in your community or social group. Identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender does have the advantage of giving you an entry ticket to a community and social network.

Discrimination against people on grounds of their sexual orientation is illegal. If you are harassed or attacked because of your sexuality, this is a hate crime and is illegal. You should report it to the police.



You can find more information about sexuality and gender on these websites:

www.bbc.co.uk/radio1

www.youthinformation.com

www.thesite.org

The London Lesbian and Gay Switchboard operates a 24-hour helpline and will be able to refer you to other helplines and support/social groups in your area:

www.ilgs.org.uk

Helpline **020 7837 7324** (daily 10am–11pm)

PACE offers counselling and support to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people in the London area and publishes a range of booklets and information about LGBT health and well-being issues:

www.pacehealth.org.uk

020 7700 1323

www.mermaidsuk.org.uk is a website for young people with gender identity issues and their families.

Sexual relationships

Deciding to have a sexual relationship is a big issue as it involves both your body and your emotions. You need to be sure it is the right decision for you.

There are a lot of things you need to think about before deciding to have sex.

- Is this the right person?
- Is this the right time in your life?
- Is it what you genuinely want to do?
- How will you feel if the relationship breaks up?

Remember, not every young person of your age has had sex – despite what your friends may tell you. It is your choice. It's about your body, and how you feel about yourself and your partner.

If you do decide to have sex, it should be because you feel emotionally and physically ready and you trust your partner.

- Talk to your partner about whether this is the right decision for both of you.
- Ask them about their sexual history (including whether they have been exposed to any STIs).
- Ask if they are currently sexually involved with other people.
- Talk about your concerns to someone else you trust.
- Don't ever have sex because you feel under pressure, from your partner or from peers.

Violent and abusive relationships

Some sexual relationships are not healthy. These are relationships where one partner is:

- bullied
- threatened with physical violence
- physically attacked
- mentally bullied and undermined
- coerced into doing things they don't want to do.

These are all forms of what is called 'domestic violence' – even if you aren't sharing a house or married to the person who is doing this to you.



If you are in an abusive relationship, you should talk to someone you trust, or contact a domestic violence helpline.

National Domestic Violence Helpline **0808 200 0247** free 24-hour.

For more information about abusive relationships and how to get help, go to:

www.womensaid.org.uk

or

www.refuge.org.uk

Domestic violence is a criminal offence. Call the police on 999 if you or anyone you know is in immediate danger of harm.

How healthy is your relationship?

The signs of a healthy relationship include:

- loving and taking care of yourself
- respecting your partner's right to be himself or herself
- having a life outside the relationship, with your own friends and your own activities
- making decisions together, each partner compromising when necessary
- resolving conflicts through open and honest communication
- having more good times than bad in the relationship.

The signs of an unhealthy relationship include:

- focusing all your energy on loving and caring for your partner
- trying to change your partner to be what you want them to be
- dropping friends and family or activities you enjoy to please your partner
- one partner makes all the decisions
- one partner yells, hits, or throws things at the other during arguments
- having more bad times than good in the relationship.



Rape and sexual assault

Rape is when someone forces another person to have penetrative sex – vaginal, anal or oral – against their will.

Sexual assault is any sort of unwanted sexual contact or behaviour.

Drug and date rape

In some cases a rape victim is given drugs without them knowing, by 'spiking' their drink.

Date rape drugs can cause memory loss too so the victim can't remember what happened.

Never accept a drink from someone you've never met before. Always take your drink with you if you're going to the toilet, or leave it with a friend.

Stalking/harassment

If you are being stalked or harassed, you can contact The Network for Surviving Stalking. This is a national organisation that supports victims, potential victims and others affected by stalking or harassment.

www.nss.org.uk

What to do if you've been raped or sexually assaulted

If you've been raped or sexually assaulted, report it to the police as soon as possible.

You can ask to speak to an officer who is the same sex as you. They will be experienced in dealing with victims of sexual assault and will understand the distress and fear you may be feeling.

You may be asked to give the police the clothes you were wearing when you were assaulted. This is because the clothes may contain traces of evidence that can identify the person who attacked you.

The police will arrange for you to have a medical examination. The doctor will treat any injuries you have and also collect any evidence that may help the police with their investigation. The doctor will talk to you about the examination beforehand, so you understand what they're doing and why they're doing it.

Even if you have no symptoms, you should have a check up for sexually transmitted infections. Ask your GP or go to your nearest family planning centre or young people's sexual health centre, such as Brook.

You should also be checked for HIV infection. There is medication that can stop HIV infection in some people but this must be taken soon after the assault. Go to your nearest sexual health clinic or A&E department.



You can get free, confidential advice on HIV from the Terrence Higgins Trust helpline on **0845 12 21 200** (10am-10pm weekdays, 12pm-6pm weekends) and from the Sexual Healthline on **0800 567 123** (24/7)

If you are over 16, hospitals and doctors must keep what you tell them totally confidential, and will not tell the police unless you ask them to. Even if you are under 16, most doctors will try to keep what you say confidential, unless they think you are at risk of serious harm. If you don't want to tell your own GP, go to a sexual health centre.



If you have been raped or subjected to sexual assault and need to talk to someone in confidence, you can get help from:

Victim Support **0845 30 30 900**

Rape and Sexual Assault Support Centre
0808 802 9999

www.rapecrisis.org.uk

Myths about rape

Myth: Women who are out late at night on their own only have themselves to blame if they get raped.

Fact: Just 9% of rapes are committed by strangers.

Myth: Women 'ask for it' by the way they dress and behave.

Fact: Rape is an act of violence not sex – it's nothing to do with what a woman is wearing. Women of all ages get raped.

Myth: Everyone knows when a woman says no, she means yes.

Fact: Rape is a terrifying, violent and humiliating experience. The law says that a person has a right to change their mind about having sex at any point during sexual contact and the other person should respect this. If a sexual partner does not stop when you say no, it is sexual assault.

Myth: It can't be rape if she's your girlfriend or you've had sex before.

Fact: If someone forces you to have sex against your will, whether you have had sex with them before or not, this is sexual assault. Both partners have to consent to sex. Sex without consent is rape.

Myth: She asked for it – she was drunk.

Fact: Legally, if a person is unconscious or affected by alcohol or drugs, they are seen as unable to give informed consent to sex. Having non-consensual sex with a person who is drunk or has taken drugs is sexual assault.

Myth: Women enjoy it. They secretly want to be raped, and anyway, she didn't fight back.

Fact: Rapists often use the threat of violence or death to make a woman submit to rape and to frighten her into not reporting it. The violence doesn't have to be visible.

Myth: Men can't just stop – once they get aroused they can't help themselves.

Fact: Most rapes are planned. Gang rapes are always planned. Men can quite easily control their urge to have sex - they do not need to rape a woman to satisfy them. Men who rape or sexually assault do so to dominate, violate and control women.

Myth: Men who rape are sexually frustrated monsters.

Fact: Men who rape are as likely as any other man to be in a longstanding relationship with a woman. More than one in five women are raped by their partner or husband.

Myth: Women make up stories about being raped.

Fact: Fewer than one in ten rape allegations (about 8%) are false – the same proportion of false allegations as any other crime.

Myth: Women cannot rape other women; men can't rape another man.

Fact: The majority of sexual assaults are committed by men against women, but anyone can be sexually assaulted. Emotional, physical and sexual abuse happens in same sex relationships too.



It's your body



Harmful traditional practices

Harmful traditional practices, such as female genital mutilation, are another kind of sexual violence that affects girls and women from particular communities.

It is usually a traditional practice that has occurred for many years and is justified on the basis that it is cultural or part of the community's tradition.

Female genital mutilation (FGM)

Female genital mutilation (FGM) is also known as female circumcision or female genital cutting. It is mostly performed on young girls aged between four and ten.

It is very common among people from many northern African countries – Egypt, Ethiopia, Somalia and Sudan in particular. It is practised less often by people from Nigeria, Kenya, Togo and Senegal. It is also found in some communities in the Middle East, in Yemen, Oman and Iraqi Kurdistan. It is not a religious practice.

Young women in the UK may be at risk because their community comes from these parts of the world and still practises FGM.

FGM has serious health risks. As it involves cutting away parts of the young child's genitalia, often without anaesthetic or proper surgical instruments, the operation itself carries big risks, including blood loss and infection. Over a woman's lifetime, it can cause a lot of other health problems, including difficulties with periods, sexual problems, chronic infections and difficulties in childbirth.

Many women think they have to agree to FGM or they will be shunned by their community. They don't know that it isn't practised in most other communities.



FGM is a crime in the UK. If you or someone you know is at immediate risk of harm phone the police on 999. If it isn't an emergency, call **0300 123 1212** and say why you need to talk to someone. The switchboard will put you through to the specialist unit.

You can also get help from FORWARD, a national information and advice organisation that is working to stop FGM. They can give you advice and information about where to get protection and medical help.

www.forwarduk.org.uk
0208 960 4000

Forced marriage

A forced marriage is a marriage where threats, pressure or violence are used to make two people marry without their consent.

Forced marriage is not the same as an arranged marriage. In an arranged marriage, the families take a lead role in choosing the marriage partner, but the two people choose whether they want to marry.

A marriage must be entered into with the full and free consent of both partners. The pressure put on people to marry against their will can be physical (including threats or actual physical violence) or emotional (for example, when someone is told that they are bringing shame on their family).

In some cases people may be taken abroad, unaware that they are to be married. Their passports may be taken by their family to stop them returning home.

For sources of help, see Honour-based violence opposite.

Forced marriage is illegal in the UK, under the Forced Marriage (Civil Protection) Act 2007. The courts can issue a Forced Marriage Protection Order to prevent someone being forced into marriage or taken abroad for a forced marriage.

Honour based violence/killings

In some cultures, people (mainly woman) who are thought to have brought shame on their family or community by behaving in ways that have breached its honour code may be abused or even killed. This is known as honour-based killing or violence – but it is nothing to do with honour. It is simple murder or abuse.

Honour-based violence occurs across many cultures and communities: Turkish, Kurdish, Afghani, South Asian, African, Middle Eastern, South and Eastern European. It is nothing to do with religious belief or practice. Honour-based violence tends to be found in cultures that are strongly male-dominated.

Women may be killed for wearing make-up or clothes that are thought to be inappropriate; for having a

boyfriend who is not from their community; for refusing to take part in a forced marriage; if they are seen kissing or being intimate in public; if they get pregnant outside marriage; if they are in a relationship with someone from another faith, or if they leave their husband or seek divorce.

These kinds of killings are often planned and may be made to look like a suicide, or an accident. Women may be forced to take their own life, or made to feel so guilty that they choose to do so to escape the shame and family pressure.

If you or someone you know is at risk of forced marriage or fear that you will be harmed because you are challenging family or cultural customs, you should get help urgently.



Honour-based violence and forced marriage are crimes. If you or someone you know is at immediate risk of harm phone the police on 999. If it isn't an emergency, call **0300 123 1212** and say why you need to talk to someone. The switchboard will put you through to the specialist unit.

There are also some very good helplines and organisations who can advise and support people at risk of forced marriage or honour-based violence.

Karma Nirvana is a national charity that supports victims and survivors of forced marriage and honour based abuse. Its website has a lot of information about forced marriage and your rights and how to get help.

www.karmanirvana.org.uk

Honour network helpline **0800 5999 247**

The Iranian and Kurdish Women's Rights Organisation is a secular and politically unaffiliated organisation that supports women and girls who speak Kurdish, Farsi, Turkish, Arabic and Dari. It specialises in family issues such as domestic violence, forced marriage and honour-based violence.

www.ikwro.org.uk

Helpline **0207 920 6460** (9.30-5.00) or **07862 733511** (24hrs)



Southall Black Sisters runs a resource centre in West London for women experiencing violence and abuse. It offers specialist advice, information, casework, advocacy and counselling and self-help support services in several community languages.

www.southallblacksisters.org.uk

Helpline **0208 571 0800** Monday–Friday 10am–5pm.

General enquiries **0208 571 9595**

Monday–Friday 9am–4pm.

You can also contact:

National Domestic Violence Help Line **0808 200 0247**

The Metropolitan Police Service Racial and Violent Crime Task Force **0207 230 5078**

The Metropolitan Police Service Specialist Crime Directorate **07748 704087** (24 hrs)

Two other helpful sources of advice and information about your legal rights are:

The Crown Prosecution Service

www.cps.gov.uk and search for honour-based violence and forced marriage **0208 901 5803**

The Foreign & Commonwealth Office Forced Marriage Unit

www.fco.gov.uk and search for **forced marriage** **0207 008 0151**

Child sexual abuse

Sexual abuse is when a child or young person is pressured, forced or tricked into taking part in any kind of sexual activity – by an adult or by another young person.

The sexual activity doesn't have to involve penetration – it includes kissing, touching the young person's genitals or breasts, and oral sex. It also includes encouraging a child or young person to look at pornographic magazines, films or sexual acts, and 'grooming' – when an abuser deliberately does things to win the trust of a child or young person so they can sexually abuse them.

Another word for a sexual abuser is paedophile. If someone has been convicted of sexual abuse, they are called a sex offender. They can be male or female and they are not always adults. In most cases the person committing the sexual abuse is known to the family or the child.

If you or someone you know is a victim of sexual abuse or at risk, you should seek help. There are some very good helplines that are free and confidential where you can talk about what is happening to you, or about past sexual abuse. They can also help you get help.

Sexual abuse can have long-lasting effects. Talking about it will be very hard, but not talking about it can affect the rest of your life and cause more pain.



Sexual abuse is a crime. If you or someone you know is at immediate risk of harm phone the police on **999**. If it isn't an emergency, call **0300 123 1212** and say why you need to talk to someone. The switchboard will put you through to the specialist unit.

You can also get help from:

Childline
0800 1111
www.childline.org.uk

NSPCC
0808 800 5000
www.nspcc.org.uk

Victim support
0845 30 30 900
www.victimsupport.org.uk

Survivors UK (for male survivors of sexual violence)
0845 12 12 01
www.survivorsuk.org

Spirit possession or faith-based child abuse

Faith-based child abuse or spirit possession refers to the abuse of children and young people who are believed to be taken over or possessed by an evil spirit. They are thought by their family, church or community to be an evil person.

The abuse may be psychological and emotional – the child may be subjected to verbal abuse. They will be told that they are hated by everyone because they are evil, and that they are responsible for bad things happening to other people.

The child may be physically abused to ‘beat out the devil’ and to punish them. This may include beating with heavy implements, stamping on the child’s stomach, kicking, punching, and starving them – sometimes to death.

They may be neglected, isolated from other people and children, taken out of school and prevented from getting medical treatment for their injuries. They may be thrown out of the family home.

In some cases, they may be subjected to sexual abuse, because no one cares what happens to them.

In many instances, the accusation of spirit possession is made by the pastor of the church attended by the family. The pastor may conduct exorcism rites on the child, which can cause extreme harm and suffering and even cause their death. In extreme instances, the pastor may even prescribe death as the only way to ‘deliver’ the child from evil.

Children with disabilities such as autism, epilepsy and learning difficulties are at risk. Children who are not living with their birth parents, such as those in private fostering arrangements, or living with step parents, are also at risk. Children who are just naughty or difficult may be branded a witch and subjected to exorcism.

Faith-based child abuse is child abuse. If you or anyone you know is at risk, you should contact the police or talk to someone from outside the church or community who can help you.



Faith-based child abuse is a crime. If you or someone you know is at immediate risk of harm phone the police on **999**. If it isn’t an emergency, call **0300 123 1212** and say why you need to talk to someone. The switchboard will put you through to the specialist unit.

AFRUCA - Africans Unite against Child Abuse (UK) is a charity formed to raise awareness of and challenge cruelty against African children in the UK. This includes faith-based child abuse.

www.afruca.org
0844 660 8607

The Victoria Climbié Foundation campaigns to improve child protection for children at risk of faith-based abuse.

www.vcf-uk.org
0208 571 4121

The Churches’ Child Protection Advisory Service (CCPAS) is an independent Christian charity providing professional advice, support, training and resources in all areas of safeguarding children, including faith-based abuse.

www.ccpas.co.uk
0845 120 45 50

