



# D.U.R.S

DELIVERY | UNDERSTAND | RELATIONSHIP | SUPPORT

# PEER ACTION COLLECTIVE

## DELIVERING A SENSITIVE PSHE SESSION

A Guide Developed By Young People For Teachers

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## WHO ARE WE?

The Peer Action Collective (PAC) is a £11.4 million programme, which aims to give young people the chance to make their communities safer, fairer places to live. It is funded by the Youth Endowment Fund, the #iwill Fund (a joint investment between the National Lottery Community Fund and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport) and the Co-op Group. We are one of 7 areas working on PAC. We cover the North East with one team in Middlesbrough at Youth Focus North East and the other in Gateshead at NE Youth.

PAC is a youth-led project, where young people, employed as peer researchers, social action leads and changemakers, research the root causes of serious youth violence and transform their findings into social action projects - creating safer and fairer communities where young people can thrive and flourish.

We are a group of 8 peer researchers (young people who conduct the research), 2 social action leads (young people who lead on social action, supported by Changemakers), 2 lead youth workers and 1 programme manager.

*"We all joined PAC for similar reasons - we have witnessed or experienced youth violence. And we want to see change!"*

*"We joined PAC so we could be the ones to make that change." - Peer Researcher*

# INTRODUCTION TO THE GUIDE

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This guide is for teachers and support staff within schools to provide robust resources and information to be used when delivering Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education (PSHE) to young people.

The guide was designed by young people for young people. It was created to provide support to teachers to pick up this guide to support the delivery of PSHE lessons, as we recognise it's tough being a teacher and you don't always get all the support you need to deliver PSHE as well as you would like. The young people who created it wanted the guide to be useful and relevant to the needs of young people.

The themes and topics have been chosen from the findings of the research undertaken, which has highlighted the need for more interactive PSHE sessions in schools. PAC have interviewed 157 young people over the course of their research, and in total, has engaged with over 500 young people across the North East.

The guide covered top tips and recommendations, how to build a positive relationship with young people, the environment and delivering a session. We have included a session plan with guidance to support teachers in exploring the topic of a trusted adult.

We hope this easy-to-use guide will assist teachers with their PSHE delivery. We hope that teachers and support staff implement the learning from the research and use the D.U.R.S framework in their practice.

To support teachers and support staff to build and maintain positive and trusting relationships with young people, provide engaging and youth-focused education and champion youth voice, PAC designed their own framework based on the four key themes which emerged from their research. This framework is referred to as **D.U.R.S**, and stands for: **Delivery**, **Understanding**, **Relationship**, **Support**.





# OUR RESEARCH FINDINGS

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We have spoken to young people from diverse backgrounds and communities, including young people from minority and marginalised communities across the North East, to understand their experiences and perceptions of serious youth violence. Through our research, we have given young people a platform to share their views on how we address serious youth violence and promote thriving in our community.

We have conducted two phases of research and embedded these findings into social action, facilitating meaningful change to young people across the North East and beyond.

In our first phase of research, we explored experiences, perceptions, and young people's solutions to serious youth violence in schools. To add more depth to our data, we explored the relationship between PSHE, support services and serious youth violence in schools. This project aimed to understand whether PSHE and support services have an impact on serious youth violence in the North East.

If you wish to explore the research findings, please go to the research report.

The findings from the research have led to the creation of this guide. To provide useful tools, top tips, and resources for teachers to deliver high-quality PSHE sessions in schools that will educate young people in how to look after themselves and their peers. This guide is to support teachers who, from our research, we know, are already stretched and have limited resources. The young people we spoke to appreciated that being a teacher is tough and that teachers can feel just as uncomfortable as the young people when teaching sensitive topics. They have developed this guidance to support you in delivering lessons as sensitively as possible.

The research carried out has led to the development of the D.U.R.S framework. This framework is to provide guidance on delivering PSHE.

This framework was designed by young people to show professionals working with young people the areas and topics they should focus their work on.



# D

## Delivery

Our research highlighted that the delivery of PSHE within schools was inconsistent, with some young people reporting how beneficial their PSHE lessons were and others who reported lacklustre or non-existent. Many young people wanted more fun, engaging and interactive methods of teaching during PSHE lessons. Likewise, our research highlighted the value of including expert or lived experience organisations in PSHE sessions. Although this was not common practice, when this occurred, young people reported a multitude of benefits. All young people should have access to high-quality, youth-centred PSHE; likewise, all teachers should be given the training and support to deliver such sessions.

# U

## Understanding

Our research highlighted inconsistencies in how some teachers respond to young people. Some teachers were perceived as trusted, empathetic, calm and consistent; communication underpinned a feeling of being understood by teachers. Whereas some teachers were described as confrontational and unpredictable, which prevented the young people from forming trusted relationships with the teachers. All young people need consistent, calm and empathetic relationships which empower them to thrive. Additionally, teachers should be provided with support, supervision, and additional training to enable them to better support young people.

# R

## Relationship

Our research highlighted that positive student-teacher relationships were especially reliant on trust. There were inconsistent reports from young people regarding their trust in teachers; some teachers were deemed trustworthy, and others were not. Teachers who kept the young persons' information confidential were deemed trustworthy. However, when students perceived the teacher had unnecessarily breached their confidence by informing others of their disclosure, the trust was damaged, particularly if there were consequences for the young person.

# S

## Support

Some young people did not feel they could access pastoral support or designated safe space; some reported having such requests denied, whereas others did not feel confident enough to ask teachers, or were disheartened by the long waiting lists. Other young people had more positive experiences, where their teachers had supported them during difficult times, which led to a trusting relationship. Additionally, young people in alternative education provisions were more likely to report having access to a safe space and pastoral support, highlighting the potential to explore this model of support in mainstream education.

# PAC'S TOP TIPS FOR DELIVERING SENSITIVE PSHE SESSIONS

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We recommend providing clear guidance on what PSHE is, the topics that will be covered and the benefits these can bring. Allowing students to let you know the topics they'd find most useful can help make sessions more meaningful and relevant to their lives. In our research we found that students wanted to learn about;

- Finance, budgeting and managing money
- Mortgages, rent, and household bills
- Mental health
- Healthy relationships.
- Knife Crime
- Setting boundaries
- Peer pressure and being your own person
- Trusted adults
- Drugs and alcohol

We encourage you not to try and cover all topics in one session but rather, let each session build on the next, giving you time to get to know, build trust, and develop relationships with your students as you go.

We recommend listening to the voices of young people and involving them in decision-making. Examples of good practice are reflection/evaluation activities to gain insight into the learning of young people, anonymous comment boxes and youth-led peer education groups. *"Teach us how to deal with our problems and then that's where you'll find results."*

We encourage you to use interactive and engaging methods of teaching and to deliver content confidently. For example, using quizzes, case studies and peer discussions and debates. *"I don't think it's taken seriously enough when people do listen. it's just off a script, not child focused, just a guy or girl speaking, not very beneficial."*

Include lived experience and expert organisations, particularly on topics in which you are not knowledgeable. National organisations that can provide this support include Young Minds, Brooke and the NSPCC. There will be local youth work organisations who can also provide this support. *"We want people who are relatable."*  
*"it's awkward to learn from your history teacher about sex ed."*

From our research we know that delivering fun, informative, and sensitive PSHE sessions requires a positive relationship between young people and teachers, underpinned by mutual trust and respect.



# STEP ONE:

## BUILDING A POSITIVE RELATIONSHIP

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1. Be consistent in your approach with young people. Where possible, keep the same time, date, etc, so the young people know what to expect. Also, be consistent with your approach and language used. *They're bipolar. I go in and they're like: "You're amazing, you're going to be absolutely brilliant when you grow up, you're going to do this," and then the next day I go in and they're like: "You're going to be a failure," and I'm like: "Okay, thanks [laughter]."*
2. Be calm in your response, particularly when resolving conflict. Ensure you have coping strategies such as taking a deep breath or getting additional support when needed to ensure you are able to manage the situation in a calm manner. *"Just talk normally. Stop raising their voice."*
3. Avoid the use of power dynamics and work with young people to encourage participation and empowerment: *"It's basically just teaching them to treat them like people. Shocker. Kids are people. Shocking."*
4. Listen to the voices of young people. This could include using youth-led steering groups, comment boxes, or feedback loops. *"Whenever something's happening, we have to listen to their opinion, but then whenever we want to express ours, they never listen."*
5. Where possible, prioritise young people's confidentiality: *"So if they keep things confidential, it makes them more trustworthy."*

"She gives you compliments. She let's you off with being rebellious"

"She doesn't scream at you or get in your face"

What Does A Trusted Teacher Look Like to Young People?

"She's just nice"

He came out and checked on me and was like, "Right, you are not in a good head space to be in school at all. I'm going to send you to the nurse, she's going to send you home." The second he did that, I trusted him completely..."

"Because he's [teacher] just a chill guy and can take a joke."

# STEP TWO: CONSIDER THE ENVIRONMENT WHEN DELIVERING PSHE

1. The young people we spoke to in our research identified the need for a safe space in their school for when they were feeling overwhelmed, distressed, or agitated.
2. Delivering sensitive PSHE sessions in a designated safe space, with safe people, such as pastoral support staff and counsellors.
3. Breakout rooms would promote self-care in young people - letting them know it is ok to take a break when they need to. These need to be a safe space that would encourage a young person to reflect on what they are feeling and why. It should have visual strategies that young people can use such as breathing exercises.

During our research, the young people designed their perfect safe space; we encourage you, where possible, to create a safe space to deliver PSHE sessions. This can be achieved by asking young people to explore what would be beneficial not only for them but their peers and what would be needed for the space, such as resources and equipment. Depending on the space and limitations, a safe space could include:

- 1) Displays of artwork or poems.
- 2) Displays of support services - You could display our Q-Cards!
- 2) Beanbags
- 3) Fairy lights.
- 4) Fidget toys.
- 5) Blankets

**The young people highlighted the most important part of a safe space is comfort;**



# STEP THREE:

## DELIVERING THE SESSION

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1. The young people we spoke to identified the need for teachers to be confident and knowledgeable on the topic they are teaching. We know teachers have limited time, so we have designed a PSHE framework on the topics young people said were important to them.
2. Set ground rules for each session, especially when covering topics that may be more sensitive. It is beneficial to co-create these with young people. Ask them what they think is needed to keep everyone safe and comfortable.
3. Use a fun ice-breaker to introduce the young people to the topic in a light-hearted manner. This can include using a beach ball with questions to promote a conversation or give a fact about the topic.
4. Empower the young people to share their views and opinions, and actively listen to and support them. Examples can include quizzes, debates, arts and crafts and social action projects.
5. Use fun and interactive methods of teaching - allow the young people to be creative and hands-on. For example, you could include different storytelling methods where the young people design a character who is experiencing bullying. Other examples could be using poems, arts and crafts, flipchart paper and pens and case studies.

### **Aftercare:**

1. Leave some time before the end of the session to cool down, particularly if the content has covered sensitive topics. Allowing for this time will enable young people to reflect on the subject and ask any further questions they may have. Examples can include using a reflective journal or smaller discussions to reflect on the young people's experience.
2. Ensure the young people know where they can access support if they have had similar experiences, within school, and outside of school - you can use our Q-cards which provide local support services on various topics.
3. Some topics may be more beneficial if taught over multiple sessions, especially if the content covered is sensitive, or if young people may have had similar experiences.



# TRUSTED ADULT SESSION PLAN

## NOTES

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### **Session notes (please read before the start of the lesson)**

Begin the session by explaining to the group that this can be a sensitive topic and that we are not trying to catch anyone out or make anyone feel uncomfortable. Encourage the young people to ask questions and to listen to each other. Explain that there is no such thing as a silly or wrong question.

### **Activity 2: Who do you talk to?**

Teacher support points: It's okay to talk to more than one person if you need to. Even if a friend says they'll keep a secret, sometimes it's safer to speak to a trusted adult. Adults in school (like teachers, safeguarding leads) are trained to help. Trust can take time to build and it's okay if you need time to decide who you're comfortable with.

### **Activity 3: What is a trusted adult?**

Teacher support points: Trusted adults don't always have all the answers but they will help you find support. If someone makes you uncomfortable, you don't have to talk to them, choose someone else you trust. You can have more than one trusted adult in your life. Trusted adults respect your feelings and want to help you feel safe.

### **Activity 4: Scenario: Who would you tell?**

Teacher support points: Everyone might feel comfortable talking to different people and that's normal. It's important to choose someone who helps you feel safe, respected and supported. If one person doesn't help or listen, you can always speak to someone else. Trusted adults are there to help you, not to get you in trouble.

### **Activity 5: My trusted adult map**

Teacher support points: Trusted adults should help you feel safe, listened to and respected. You can always talk to more than one person if you need to. If someone isn't helpful, you can keep looking until you find someone who is. Trusted adults want to help and are there to support you, not to judge or blame you.

Teacher support point: Reinforce the message: If one adult doesn't help, keep telling others until someone does.

# TRUSTED ADULT SESSION PLAN

## (1 HOUR)

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### General Session Outline

1. Learning Objectives - 5 minutes
2. Who do you talk to? - 10 minutes
3. What is a trusted adult? - 10 minutes
4. Scenario: who would you tell? - 15 minutes
5. My trusted adults map - 10 minutes
6. Reflection - 10 minutes

### Activity 1: Learning Objectives

- Using the slides go through the learning objectives so the students will have an understanding of what today's lesson will be about.
- Resources needed: The slides provided

### Activity 2: Who do you talk to?

- Ask the students to work in pairs or small groups.
- Ask: "If someone was worrying you or made you uncomfortable, who would you talk to?"
- Gather answers on the board - expect a mix of peers, family and adults.
- Discussion Prompt: What makes someone trustworthy? (answers might include: listened, doesn't judge, keeps things private, helps you feel safe)
- Resources needed: The slides provided, big whiteboard for discussion

### Activity 3: What is a trusted adult?

Define a trusted adult: someone over 18 who is responsible, supportive and helps keep you safe.

Examples: Parent, carer, teacher, school nurse, sports coach, youth worker.

Using the following slide, go through the trusted adult characteristics.

Resources needed: The slides provided.

To access the trusted adults slides, please scan this QR code:



# TRUSTED ADULT SESSION PLAN

## (1 HOUR) CONT.

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### **Activity 4: Scenario: Who would you tell?**

Give each group the activity 1: Scenario, Who would you tell? And get them to read the scenarios and answer the questions below.

Groups present their thoughts to the class.

Resources needed: The slides provided, the activity hand out.

### **Activity 5: My trusted adult map**

Hand the students activity 2: my trusted adult map and ask them to complete the worksheet.

Encourage both writing and drawing for differentiation.

Resources needed: The slides provided, the activity hand out.

### **Activity 6: Reflection**

As a group, take a class discussion to answer the questions on the board.

Resources needed: The slides provided

### **Lesson Aftercare:**

Teachers should:

- Use active listening if the young person wants to open up to them about something
- Remember to follow safeguarding: don't promise confidentiality
- Subtly check in with the student later
- Seek support if you need it
- Signpost to more support, either online or with specific people such as pastoral teams within the school





# CONCLUSION

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We hope that you have found this guide useful and the resources are beneficial in delivering high-quality PSHE lessons to young people.

We would love to hear your feedback on the resources and success stories of using the guide. Please contact Youth Focus North East at [office@youthfocusne.org.uk](mailto:office@youthfocusne.org.uk) or NE Youth at [info@neyouth.org.uk](mailto:info@neyouth.org.uk)

## **Support services to direct young people to:**

**Childline:** [childline.org.uk](http://childline.org.uk): 0800 1111 (Free 24/7)

**The Mix:** [themix.org.uk](http://themix.org.uk): 0808 808 4994 (Free for under-25s)

**Kooth:** [kooth.com](http://kooth.com) (Free)

**Mind:** 0300 123 3393



The image features two stylized hands reaching upwards, composed of word clouds. The upper hand is yellow and filled with positive adjectives such as 'funny', 'nice', 'kind', 'respectful', 'helpful', 'patient', 'sociable', 'relatable', and 'friendly'. The lower hand is blue and contains similar terms along with verbs and nouns like 'social', 'helpful', 'understand', 'trust', 'funny', 'smart', 'cool', 'banter', 'loving', 'supportive', 'caring', 'respectful', 'patient', 'validating', 'equality', 'communication', 'listens', and 'kind'. Above the hands, the acronym 'D.U.R.S.' is displayed in large, bold letters, each a different color (red, blue, yellow, green). Below it, the full names of the components are listed: 'DELIVERY | UNDERSTAND | RELATIONSHIP | SUPPORT'.



