



Preventing Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence

A strategy for the next generation: For every child in every school

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“By prioritising prevention, we can end this public health crisis and empower young people to make the choices that will prevent them becoming victims or perpetrators of domestic abuse and sexual violence.”

Susie McDonald, CEO, Tender



Tender's Call To Action

Tender is calling for consistent, high quality and effective relationships education for all children in England from age 5 by the end of the decade wherever they go to school. This can be delivered through three Pillars for Change:

1

Prevention Agenda

An integrated government Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Prevention Agenda that brings together the best thinking from both Education and VAWG (Violence Against Women & Girls) specialists at local, regional and national levels.

2

RSHE: a specialist subject

Designate the RSHE curriculum a specialist subject with core elements aligned to safeguarding policies, best practice and quality assurance that gives teachers the skills, knowledge and confidence to support young people to safely navigate relationships in their early years.

3

Funding for Specialist Teachers

All schools have sufficient funding and access to trained specialist teachers and local accredited delivery partners that can deliver consistent, safe, healthy relationships education that is informed by VAWG specialists and the voice of young people.



**"Prevention is the thing we haven't tried yet.
It's got to be worth a go."**

Jess Phillips MP



Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence: A Public Health Crisis

“We spend all our time on crisis reaction and support. At every strategy meeting, we talk about prevention but rarely see that in action.”

Nicole Jacobs Domestic Abuse Commissioner for England & Wales

Domestic abuse is a public health crisis of epidemic proportions. Statistics around victims of domestic and sexual violence remaining stubbornly high; the victim is female in 74.1% of domestic abuse-related crimes¹ and one woman is killed by a man every 3 days in the UK².

The Domestic Abuse Commissioner estimates that domestic abuse related offences have more than doubled since 2016³.

Domestic and sexual violence is intensely present in the lives of young people. Young people aged 16-24 are the age group most likely to experience domestic abuse in their relationships⁴ and 1 in 7 children under the age of 18 have lived with domestic violence at some point in their childhood⁵.

Campaigns such as “Everyone’s Invited” have published over 50,000 anonymous accounts of sexual violence at UK educational settings. In 2021, an Ofsted review revealed that “sexual harassment occurs so frequently [in young people’s lives] that it has become ‘commonplace’”⁶. Domestic and sexual violence reduce young people’s ability to participate in society and exacerbate entrenched, intersecting disadvantage: including mental ill-health, homelessness and educational absence.





The social and economic costs of domestic abuse are estimated to be in the region of £78 billion (2022/23 prices) over a three-year average period of abuse ⁷. The largest proportion is the physical and emotional harm caused to victims (£47bn), while also costing the Exchequer £19bn in loss of economic output and spending to deal with the consequences of domestic abuse across the NHS, the criminal justice system and services for victims/survivors.

We urgently need a fully funded suite of domestic abuse prevention interventions that seek to respond to this public health crisis. We need to embed healthy relationships education for all children and young people in England with long term investment that creates long term change.

There are amazing organisations supporting victims and working with perpetrators and they have never been more vital. But this violence has persisted at these levels for decades. It is time for it to end. The vast majority of spending goes on frontline crisis support, but prevention delivers the best outcomes for society as a whole and for each young person and needs to be properly funded if we are going to break the cycle of abuse.

Tender's case for domestic abuse prevention

"Drama is a chance to practice how to get things right in the real world"

Year 5 student

Tender has been delivering and championing prevention as a means of ending domestic and sexual violence for two decades.

We are one of the few UK organisations focused solely on the prevention of domestic abuse and sexual violence amongst young people. Tender has built a robust and well-respected approach to preventing violence occurring in the current and future relationships of young people. We use drama, arts and media to provide a safe, playful space where young people can engage with sensitive topics, "rehearse" for real life situations and explore their rights, responsibilities and expectations within relationships.

"It is clear that the students responded to the approach taken, and this has impacted on my approach in class. By sharing a common language of what defines an unhealthy relationship means we can have more frank and open discussions."

Teacher, Norwich

Tender believes all young people regardless of their privileges, vulnerabilities or life experiences should be given a variety of opportunities to participate in preventing violence and abuse in their own relationships, their friends, family and wider society.

We have supported over 535,000 young people and 27,000 adults to:

- increase their knowledge about the early warning signs of unhealthy relationships, and how to seek support
- improve their self-management and interpersonal skills such as confidence, emotional regulation and communication
- increase their understanding of the enablers and impacts of domestic abuse and sexual violence
- achieve positive attitudinal and behavioural change through reflection on their views and choices.

By changing knowledge and attitudes, we aim to shift long-term behaviour in young people's choices in their relationships.

Following our interventions, **91%** of participants have more understanding of healthy and unhealthy behaviours, **82%** feel more confident in dealing with issues around violence and abuse, and **87%** have more knowledge about where to seek support or advice. We deliver education programmes in primary and secondary schools, in special educational needs (SEND) schools, in 6th forms and universities, with vulnerable groups of young people in specialist provision settings and with adults who have a safeguarding responsibility.

Empowering young people with the knowledge and skills to form healthy relationships, protects them from a range of entrenched and often interacting consequences of abusive relationships including mental ill-health, substance misuse and risk-taking behaviour. This education creates a ripple effect across peer groups and enables young people to impact on the attitudes and behaviours of those across their communities.

Tender believes that the most effective way to stop domestic and sexual abuse is by equipping every child in the UK with the skills and knowledge to recognise the components of healthy and unhealthy relationships, identify the early warning signs of harmful behaviour and make informed, positive choices about their own behaviours in relationships. This can't be through one-off sessions or only at specific educational points but should be a continuous process where children can practice what they are learning – they deserve the opportunity to rehearse relationships. Schools are the best place to provide the opportunity to enable this to happen; they must be properly equipped and funded to do so.

"The children have been given space to safely explore relationships. I have not seen the children able to safely test out what respect and kindness looks like before – not just saying but knowing what equality is.....it's a great way to prepare them for secondary school. Gives them the confidence to speak out for what they need and what they deserve"

Teacher, Norwich



Our programmes are designed to:

Prepare

all children and young people aged 8 – 25 with the knowledge and awareness to identify healthy and unhealthy relationships, and how to seek support.

Empower

children and young people with the skills to navigate their own relationships in a positive way, and to dismantle attitudes and beliefs which condone or enable abuse.

We recognise that domestic abuse and sexual violence are systemic issues which require social change as well as individual growth. We therefore also work with adults to:

Reinforce

a culture of safe and healthy relationships in the environments where young people are. We train adults in schools, youth settings and local authorities to understand how these issues affect young people, and how to offer effective support.

Galvanize

wider communities to learn about and play a role in preventing these issues on a systemic level. We do this through influencing research and policy, training workplaces and raising awareness online.

“I was fully aware of the complex nature of violence and abuse but have now experienced a subtle and effective way to educate young children on this matter”

Teacher, Primary school, Tender RE:SET participant

Current Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) Provision

For a child starting in secondary school in September 2024 there is no guarantee that they will receive high quality relationships education.

RSHE is not seen as a specialist subject and is therefore left to schools to work out who teaches it and when it is taught. If a teacher has negative attitudes towards women, a personal experience of domestic abuse or lacks confidence to facilitate sensitive conversations with students, the risks are high. There is very limited funding to give schools access to high quality training or to partner with specialist organisations to support the delivery of the more sensitive subject areas such as domestic abuse, female genital mutilation and pornography.

Current RSHE is failing to meet the needs of our young people. A 2022 report by SafeLives found that, even with the new RSHE curriculum, only 46% of students felt confident about who to talk to if they or someone they know is experiencing abuse. Just 24% of young people could recall being taught about coercive control in RSHE classes and only 13% believed this topic was taught well⁸.

This lack of sufficient prevention education leaves children and young people isolated and vulnerable to abuse. End Violence Against Women Coalition (EVAW) said its recent research showed that 80% of girls thought schools needed to do more to support young people's sex and relationships education, and to tackle sexual harassment in schools⁹.

Teachers of RSHE must be equipped with the knowledge, skills and confidence to support young people to safely navigate relationships (of all kinds) in their early years.

"I see ego from young people, and it's hiding confusion, misinformation and, I think, some fear. We need to stop this behaviour, understand where it comes from and support it changing"

Assistant Headteacher, Secondary School, London



Let's imagine...

Maia



As she joins her secondary school aged 11, her experience of Relationships & Sex Education will be dependent on a number of inconsistent and unpredictable factors:

- the teacher – personal knowledge, attitudes and lived experience
- the training of the teacher
- the capacity and priorities of the school.

Maia may receive confusing or inaccurate information: victim blaming, a gender-neutral approach, avoidance of key information. As she builds new friendships and begins to explore romantic relationships, her assumptions about how to behave and how she should expect to be treated will come in part from her family, perhaps from online or pornographic sites and also from the education she receives at school. There is no guarantee in this current picture that those influences – family, peers, media – will ensure that Maia will avoid unhealthy, inappropriate relationships in her own life.

But if Maia has a disability, her risk of experiencing domestic or sexual violence doubles, with disabled girls being the most affected¹⁰. SafeLives' research highlights a tendency by teachers to 'infantilize' disabled students (Safelives, 2022).

Let's imagine...

Ash



He joins secondary school aged 11. The average age a person first accesses pornography is 13¹¹. If pornography features as one of Ash's consistent sources for relationship education, his notions of healthy behaviours and expectations about gender roles may be significantly distorted.

With inconsistent RSHE teaching, there may be little challenge of gender stereotypes, or misogyny. There is no guarantee in this current picture that Ash will feel confident about how to behave in his formative intimate relationships. In the void that is created by a lack of accurate, evidenced information and guidance about positive male role models and healthy masculine behaviours, Ash may seek to fill it with the loud and accessible voices of misogyny and sexism.

Let's imagine...

Jay & Casey



Rising 5s Jay and Casey begin primary school in September 2024. By the end of the decade they will be preparing for secondary school.

They are a generation of digital natives; their online and real worlds co-exist. But the ground rules for healthy interactions, whether online or in person should remain the same. As they learn to navigate their own friendships, education about kindness, pressure, gender stereotypes and healthy friendships can form a fundamental foundation for all their future relationships.

From Tender's own research, we know that child on child abuse is happening in primary schools: 31% of staff from one primary school encountered sexual harassment between pupils on most days and 50% of teachers encountered physical and verbal harassment between pupils on a weekly or daily basis. But less than half of teachers felt confident to support pupils experiencing domestic or sexual violence, a statistic echoed by research from the Sex Education Forum¹².

Our Ambition for **Maia** and **Ash**, **Jay** & **Casey**

Maia, Ash, Jay and Casey deserve high quality, specialist education about unhealthy relationships, domestic abuse and gendered violence.

This should start in Reception, using age-appropriate materials that start to embed messages about making healthy choices in friendships, and reinforcing those messages consistently throughout their education. So that by the end of Year 12 in 2030, as Maia and Ash focus on their next steps after school; whether that is going to university, taking up an apprenticeship or to start working, both will be articulate, confident and competent at navigating relationships.

Also in 2030, Jay and Casey will prepare for the first major transition of their lives with a confidence in navigating interactions with their peers. They will have their entire school career to rehearse relationships that are healthy, kind, equal and safe. They will be ambassadors that can influence their peers and will be part of a generation creating a ripple effect across society that changes behaviours and attitudes towards gendered violence and its social acceptability.



What needs to change: Tender's Call To Action

We are calling for consistent, high quality and effective relationships education for all children in England from age 5 by the end of the decade wherever they go to school.

This can be achieved through three Pillars of Change:

1 An integrated Government Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Prevention Agenda

The Government should commit to a Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Prevention Agenda that draws together the best thinking from both Education and VAWG specialists at local, regional and national levels. This will:

- provide clear direction, priorities and a strategic framework for national and regional stakeholders as they create plans and allocate budgets (including government departments, local authorities and commissioners, professional and regulatory bodies such as Ofsted and teacher training establishments)
- promote a whole school approach which ensures school culture is transformed to create a safe environment in which everyone – children, staff, governors, families and other community members – can play a role in preventing domestic abuse and sexual violence
- be informed by evidence and best practice as well as the voices of children & young people, teachers and specialist agencies in the education and VAWG spaces
- build on existing and new partnerships at local, regional and national level including excellent organisations operating at grassroots and community level but that lack reach and voice
- include additional government funding for curriculum development, teacher training, delivery and quality assurance. This must include ring-fenced budgets for schools to use to commission training from external providers
- monitor and evaluate progress to build a robust evidence base for what works, including longitudinal research to understand the effects of primary prevention interventions for violence against women and girls over time.

“Tender is a market leader. We should wisely accept Tender’s advice for a ten-year plan and create a clear agenda to support schools”

Nicole Jacobs, DA Commissioner

2 Designate the RSHE Curriculum a specialist subject aligned to safeguarding policies, best practice and quality assurance

RSHE must be considered a specialist subject with associated training and continual accreditation. Core elements of the curriculum must be incorporated in safeguarding policies and inspections to ensure these form part of the school's legal obligations to keep children safe in education, and be measured for efficacy by Ofsted and associated regulatory bodies.

We are calling for RSHE to:

- be grounded in evidence, research and best practice with a dynamic feedback loop to ensure it remains relevant and meeting the needs of children and young people
- be gender informed
- be reflective of all young people including those with SEND and/or identifying as LGBTQ+
- be consistently delivered and safe to teach, so that it is not dependent on the attitudes and experience of the individuals teaching it
- include adequate funding for schools to work with specialist partners on elements of delivery of more sensitive topics e.g. FGM, pornography
- apply to the independent sector and special educational settings too.



3 Ensure access to trained specialist teachers and/or local accredited delivery partners for all schools

Teachers of RSHE must be equipped with the knowledge, skills and confidence to support young people to safely navigate relationships (of all kinds) in their early years.

High quality teacher training is required to deliver consistent, safe, healthy relationship education that is informed by VAWG specialists and the voice of young people. The current curriculum (mandatory in all schools since 2020) is the starting point for achieving this ambition. The curriculum itself is generally robust, although the areas specifically focused on violence against women and girls are vague. But the way in which it is delivered is unreliable and inconsistent, making it potentially very harmful to young people receiving messages about gendered violence.

We are calling for:

- a minimum standards framework for training with mandatory continuing professional development (CPD) accreditation
- a directory of specialist local delivery partners with accreditation relating to the minimum standards framework
- ringfenced additional funding for schools to allocate to training and partnerships – which doesn't come out of existing school budgets.



The Pillars in Action: Key Deliverables

For many of those working to educate young people or address domestic and sexual violence, these Pillars for Change will reflect their own objectives. By working together, our shared voice can give volume, credibility and experience to this issue that has never been more urgently needed.

These Pillars can only be achieved through collaboration and partnerships at both government level and across sectors. Tender will work closely with experts in the field; to support existing work already breaking ground or to lead, where our own experience is useful.



We've outlined some of the key deliverables we can deliver together:

- map and establish partnerships with national and specialist VAWG charities and educational organisations to identify regional centres and organisations of excellence and invite them to join a coalition of experts
- create a channel for children/young people's voices to be heard, for example creating a national Youth Forum
- establish an expert Curriculum Advisory Board to work with the DfE made up of teachers, teacher trainers, delivery partners and charities to review the current curriculum areas which specifically focus on domestic and sexual violence and be responsible for ensuring implementation and quality
- create a minimum standards framework for elements of the RSHE curriculum that schools need to meet to teach this subject
- establish and fund a longitudinal study to create the evidence base of what works
- include RSHE teaching as part of learning at teacher training colleges
- attach elements of the RSHE curriculum to schools' mandatory safeguarding duty to ensure good governance and efficacy, and call for a review of Ofsted inspection framework and how it measures safeguarding
- accreditation of specialist delivery partners based on a minimum standards framework
- provide adequate funding at national and local government ringfenced for specialist teaching
- require mandatory teacher CPD and annual training (like safeguarding)
- Teacher training to be delivered by specialist accredited organisations.

Meanwhile: Tender's role and action plan

Tender's Call to Action forms one element of four areas of activity that Tender will use to frame what we do this decade.

Having built our knowledge and expertise over 20 years of on-the-ground experience, we will effect change through four streams of work. We will:

"I would love that all schools would be lucky enough to have Tender, in terms of the depth of knowledge and expertise they bring."

Nicole Jacobs, DA Commissioner

1. Influence

2. Deliver

3. Innovate

4. Evidence

1. Tender will Influence

We will make our Pillars for Change a reality for children and young people; effecting policy change and establishing a collective commitment to preventing abuse.

Objective 1

Central and local government embed a prevention agenda into their VAWG and education policies

Objective 2

RSHE curriculum is designated a specialist subject, with a minimum standards framework

Objective 3

Teachers appropriately trained and supported as trainees and qualified teachers

2. Tender will Deliver

We will deliver ongoing prevention work to equip young people with the skills and knowledge to have healthy relationships.

We have a core portfolio of services which we offer in a clearly defined way, based on evidence of the impact of a tried and tested structure, or flex to the needs of specific beneficiaries when required.

Across all our service delivery work, we will maintain a focus on our unique value propositions, which are:

- universal, prevention focused work
- an arts-based approach.

With your support, by the end of the decade we aim to reach over **400,000** children and young people and over **100,000** adults.

Objective 1

Increase the reach of our healthy relationships projects to 8 – 25 year-olds

Objective 2

Increase the reach of our existing training models for staff in educational settings

“The most impressive thing about Tender is their ability to challenge and confront stereotypical or antiquated views in a way which neither shames nor makes anyone feel inferior. All opinions are heard and everyone is made to feel safe and valued.

In creating this dynamic, views shift in a way that empowers young people to change their minds instead of making them feel chided or lectured. The skill of the workshop leaders is second to none in this regard.”

Teacher, Norfolk



3. Tender will Innovate

Developing programmes for younger years including Key Stage 1, and harnessing technology to increase our reach, and create greater value for money propositions.

We will leverage existing strong relationships with schools to begin delivery to younger age-groups, and reach out to primary schools in regions where we are already active.

We will reach more young people with special educational needs, in particular by developing our technology-based product, Relationship Goals, so that we can deliver at lower costs and make it more accessible nationally.

We will support more educational settings to achieve Champion School certification through participation in our whole setting approach programme, RE:SET, refining and modelling a whole school approach which can inform an integrated Prevention Agenda.

We will support adults in other youth settings (e.g. youth groups, church groups, third sector organisations) to develop the knowledge and skills to prevent unhealthy relationships, and support young people they are responsible for.

We will also increase the number of workplace training projects we deliver (with either a workplace culture or domestic abuse focus), to create a broader network of supporters and to amplify our influencing work.

Objective 1

Reach young people aged 5 – 8 with an age-appropriate variation of our Healthy Relationships project

Objective 2

Reach more young people in specialist settings and special educational needs

Objective 3

Support more educational settings to achieve Healthy Relationships certification through participation in our whole setting approach programme, RE:SET

Objective 4

Reach more adults with a safeguarding responsibility in non-educational settings

Objective 5

Support more employers to drive healthy workplace culture and support vulnerable client and customer groups through our workplace training offer

4. Tender will Evidence

Building an evidence base of “what works” to prevent domestic abuse and sexual violence and the impact of effective healthy relationships education.

We recognise the vital importance of evidencing the effectiveness and impact of our work, and ensuring both Tender’s own programmes and recommendations for a Prevention Agenda are led by evidence. There are currently gaps in our collective understanding of the most effective methods to prevent domestic abuse and sexual violence, which we will seek to address by working with coalition partners across the education and VAWG sectors.



Objective 1

Build long-term evidence of the effectiveness and impact of Tender’s programmes on beneficiaries

Objective 2

Tender-led research into primary school programmes to prevent domestic abuse and sexual violence

Objective 3

Primary and secondary research evidencing the effectiveness and impact of Tender’s arts-based methodology and whole school approach

Funding Prevention

Over the decade, Tender intends scaling up our influencing and delivery capacity in order to reach over 400,000 young people and over 100,000 adults by 2030.

To achieve this level of growth, we must secure **£22.7m by 2030**, effectively doubling our annual income during that period. That means we are actively seeking new supporters and additional sources of funds.

	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	Totals
Nos of young people reached	34,487	43,059	58,243	76,728	101,174	133,517	447,208
Nos of Educational Staff reached	7,040	8,340	11,434	15,227	20,287	27,033	89,361
Nos of adults in non-educational settings reached	1,747	2,288	3,088	4,169	5,626	7,594	24,512
Investment Required	£2,675,399	£2,924,803	£3,477,668	£3,930,611	£4,509,242	£5,253,886	£22,771,609

Contact susie@tender.org.uk to find out more about our plans and how you can get involved.

How you can help

You can support Tender and this vital domestic abuse and sexual violence prevention agenda by

- investing in Tender's work to prevent domestic abuse and support young people. Please contact us to discuss options for providing financial support.
- raising the importance of domestic abuse and sexual violence prevention in with politicians and policy makers. Please contact us for key points and suggested questions
- writing to the Minister for Schools, to express your support for a domestic abuse and sexual violence prevention agenda and to ask what plans they have to ensure every child and young person receives high quality healthy relationships education
- visiting our programmes in action so you can see the impact and speak to young people and teachers about the need for investment in prevention
- fundraising for Tender and raising awareness of our work and our prevention agenda amongst your networks.

Contact Susie McDonald at susie@tender.org.uk for more information about any of the above, or to learn more about domestic abuse and sexual violence prevention.

"I want to be a boy who treats girls and women well."

Year 8 participant




- ¹ ONS (2022). <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/articles/domesticabusevictimcharacteristicsenglandandwales/yearendingmarch2022#sex>
- ² Femicide Census (2020). https://www.femicidecensus.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/010998-2020-Femicide-Report_V2.pdf
- ³ Domestic Abuse Commissioner (2023). <https://domesticabusecommissioner.uk/domestic-abuse-commissioner-responds-to-latest-criminal-justice-statistics/>
- ⁴ ONS (2022). <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/articles/domesticabusevictimcharacteristicsenglandandwales/yearendingmarch2022#sex>
- ⁵ Women's Aid. https://www.womensaid.org.uk/impact-on-children-and-young-people/?_gl=1*1czfs4f*_ga*NzA2OTAzOTg0LjE2NzcwNTcyMzU.*_ga_C8H9JGBD77*MTY4OTMyMDExOS4xMDQuMS4xNjg5MzlwMjMzLjAuMC4w#:~:text=Domestic%20abuse%20services%20offer%20specialist,some%20point%20in%20their%20childhood
- ⁶ Ofsted (2021). <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/review-of-sexual-abuse-in-schools-and-colleges>
- ⁷ Home Office (2019). <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-economic-and-social-costs-of-domestic-abuse>
- ⁸ SafeLives (2022). https://safelives.org.uk/sites/default/files/resources/RSE_Report_2022_0.pdf
- ⁹ EAW (2023). <https://www.endviolenceagainstwomen.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/FINAL-About-Time-WSA-report-140723.pdf>
- ¹⁰ Public Health England (2015). https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/480942/Disability_and_domestic_abuse_topic_overview_FINAL.pdf
- ¹¹ Children's Commissioner (2023). <https://assets.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/wpuploads/2023/07/CCO-Pornography-and-Young-People-1.pdf>
- ¹² Sex Education Forum (2018). <https://www.sexeducationforum.org.uk/news/news/nearly-three-ten-teachers-deliver-relationships-and-sex-education-classes-no-training>





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