

Newsletter

Spring 2025

Welcome to the latest edition of our newsletter. We are full of springtime bounce and have lots of good things to share with you – our wonderful supporters. Enjoy!



Support Tender's Big Give Campaign

Tender is raising vital funds in Big Give's Arts for Impact Campaign running between midday 18th March and midday 25th March.

Every pound donated via their platform will be matched up to £10,000! We hope to raise a whopping £20,000 with your help.

Young people aged 16-24 face the highest risk of experiencing an abusive relationship. It's vital they learn, early on, how to identify healthy and unhealthy behaviours through relationship education.

Tender will use the money raised to increase our work in primary schools and reach out to young people at increased risk of domestic and sexual violence including those with special educational needs, young care leavers and those involved in the criminal justice system.

If you can, please donate to our campaign via the Big Give platform [here](#) and help young people protect themselves and others from abuse.



Big Give

Susie receives an MBE!



Susie McDonald, CEO of Tender, has been [recognised with an MBE](#) for her services to young people and to the prevention of abuse in the 2025 New Year Honours list.

Instrumental in developing Tender's first healthy relationships projects in 2004, Susie became CEO in 2009 and has since built an expansive programme that has reached more than half a million children and young people.

Susie McDonald MBE, Tender CEO, said:

"I'm absolutely delighted to receive this MBE, recognising my lifelong mission: to end domestic abuse and sexual violence.

Tender is not my work alone, but the collective dedication of so many talented people across more than two decades. It all started with the genius and imagination of Tamsin Larby, Tender's founder. Abuse is preventable, if only children and young people are empowered with the right skills and knowledge – and our work is proven to do this.

*I'm so grateful not only for the award, but for the light it will shine on this urgent issue. **Now is the time to prevent abuse – let's make 2025 the beginning of the end.***

Her leadership is rooted in her passion to prevent the violence and abuse endemic in the UK, a passion shared by Tender Patron, Academy Award-winning actor, Olivia Colman CBE.

Olivia said:

*"Oh my God, I am so thrilled for Susie! This recognition could not be more deserved. I've worked with her for over 10 years now and have been blown away by her unwavering energy and determination. Children and young people couldn't ask for a better champion: Susie will not stop until every one of them receives the relationships education they need. **Ending domestic abuse is a big mission for Tender, but with Susie at the helm, I truly believe it is possible.***

Susie's amazing achievement was featured by:

[The Independent](#)

[Civil Society](#)

[FE News](#)

[CYP Now](#)

[Cambridge Independent](#)



A Point of View

by Susie McDonald, Tender CEO



Susie & Dan Snow

I want to encourage you to watch the Netflix drama *Adolescence*.

As with so many murder dramas, the victim is female. In this case, she is a 13-year-old girl. But there is no mystery in this drama; our murderer is arrested at the beginning of the first episode. The plot 'twist' is that the murderer is a 13-year-old boy and wow, does he look 13 – no early maturity/older actor playing young boy – this boy really looks like a child. The brilliance of this is our realisation that not only has a child lost her life but that we as a society, as adults, have failed to protect another child from causing such horrific harm. We have failed two children.

This is a contemporary turn on the story of Babes in the Wood or Hansel and Gretel lost in the forest. Or, in this case, the terrifying dark corners of the internet. But in this modern version, Hansel and Gretel don't even have the breadcrumbs to navigate their way home. This drama demonstrates how we are, seriously and catastrophically, failing our children. **Adolescence** reveals over 4 episodes the online world that children inhabit. The father of the boy says, "he was in his bedroom, we thought he was safe". But do we really know what our children are accessing? They are vulnerable to becoming victims or perpetrators.

In the third episode, the boy talks to a clinical psychologist. He is embarrassed and uncomfortable to talk about sex and girls; this is a child who has recently murdered his classmate. We have to start conversations early.

Recently, I observed one of our projects delivered to a group of Year 9 students– the same age as the boy in **Adolescence**. They'd not had regular or nuanced relationships education. They struggled for two reasons: they weren't used to sitting in a circle, listening to one another and reflecting and responding with empathy and support: and they were absolutely not used to discussing notions of intimate relationships. If, from early in primary school, they had been having conversations about friendships, pressure, control, kindness and equality, by year 9 they would confidently contribute to and – critically - consider these issues with a maturity relevant to their age. It was clear from questions and comments that some of these children are receiving their relationship education from pornography – and violent porn at that.

So, do watch **Adolescence** if you can. It's a challenging watch but a vital one. I hope it will be a wake-up call to anyone who doesn't think that protecting our children is a societal responsibility that involves parents/families/schools/government.....frankly, all of us.

Time to Celebrate

Tender expands into Bristol



Alice and Lucy, Tender West's facilitators

Our West Team were delighted to deliver our first project in a Bristol secondary school – Bristol Cathedral Choir. This marks the expansion into a new geographical area within the region.

The school was extremely engaged with the programme and the teacher observing the project commented *"The facilitators provided a fantastic creative, warm and supportive environment, where all students felt confident to explore tough topics through a combination of insightful discussions, group work and practical drama. The impact of Tender's work with our young people will be lasting."*

Making connections with London Youth Charities

Our 'Domestic Abuse & Disclosures' for Youth Charities in London training is in full swing, with 12 projects delivered so far.

The project is funded by a grant from City Bridge Foundation. Incorporating content developed with Tender's Youth Board, the training supports adults with safeguarding responsibility in youth charities to recognise the warning signs of abuse and respond to disclosures. A recent highlight was sharing learnings with Youth Leaders from Hackney's Council for Voluntary Service who are creating their own healthy relationships workshops. It was also a great opportunity to connect them with members of Tender's Youth Board.

"The session was amazing and greatly appreciated"
Hackney CVS training, January 2025

"I have learned a lot more about different types of abuse and how to protect young people. This will serve a crucial role in my work"

Groundwork London training, January 2025



Delivery in action

New Head of Curriculum & Growth



Sarah Carpenter

In January we were pleased to welcome to the team our new Head of Curriculum & Growth, Sarah Carpenter.

Sarah joins us from a teaching background, having seen first-hand the impact of Tender's work when her school took part in our whole school approach programme, RE:SET, back in 2023. We're so pleased to have her expertise on the team, to ensure all our work remains high-quality, evidence-led and relevant.

OCN London "Assured Status" for Tender



Our brilliant Adult Services Team has received 'Assured Status' for our OCN London-accredited courses, a Level 2 in Peer Mentoring & Facilitation and a Level 3 in Developing & Delivering Domestic Abuse training.

"This is a remarkable achievement and a testament to the hard work, dedication and high standards your team consistently upholds." OCN London

Teacher training – embedding Tender's message

We want Tender's work to continue after our facilitators leave a setting. We deliver INSET sessions to support schools to continue the healthy relationships education long-term.

Training sessions happen across every Tender region. We usually start with an Introduction to Domestic Abuse before adding in topics including Raising Awareness of Child-on-Child Abuse and Online Harms.

"I thought it was really good. There was a small enough group to apply our knowledge as well as enough teacher talk."

Teacher participant, January 2025

To find out more, email Ruth Scott, ruth@tender.org.uk.



A Closer Look

Tender East: fostering collaboration between RE:SET schools

In December, Acle Academy celebrated achieving their RE:SET Healthy Relationship Champion Setting Award. This achievement is all the more remarkable because of the amazing journey the school went on with Tender to instil a positive culture where messages of respect and equality are embedded across the school community.

Right from the very first RE:SET session with the students, it became clear that there were some harmful attitudes being expressed by some of the boys. They'd been exposed to some extreme views about women and gender expectation, probably online. From that moment, Tender's Project Delivery Team was mobilised to address these attitudes at every level of the school community with the sole focus on keeping all the young people safe.



Acle Academy students beside a mural designed by young people and painted by local artist Kevin Parker as part of RE:SET

After an in-depth study of the online challenges facing our boys, the school, supported by Tender, began an integrated programme with students, teachers and parents with the aim of promoting equality and healthy behaviours. Activities included sharing a "misogyny in media" presentation with staff, mentoring vulnerable boys, whole school assemblies involving boys and girls, a whole school positive male and female role model competition. The Head Teacher wrote to parents about online harms and the mansosphere and the topic was embedded across the wider curriculum.

"The work you are doing as an organisation is so powerful and impactful. We have seen the impact first hand in the school and the wider community. Thank you for allowing us to be part of the project and for inspiring our students and school community."

Acle Academy Headteacher's feedback

The impact of RE:SET has been truly phenomenal at Acle. The cultural shift within the school is extraordinary. Now, you can hear boys openly challenging sexism in the corridors amongst their peers. As Tender East's Suzi Loades says, "Acle Academy truly embodies what RE:SET is all about."

So powerful has been the impact of RE:SET at Acle, that when we heard similar harmful attitudes being expressed by boys at a nearby primary school, we asked Acle boys to lend their support. Now, the two schools are collaborating on sharing learning between the older and young male students with a peer mentoring scheme in the pipeline. This will be a great way of empowering both age groups to act as role models, drawing on the knowledge they've gained from RE:SET and Acle's work ever since. [You can read the Eastern Daily Press article here.](#)

Spotlight



Evaluating our programmes for quality and impact

By Madeleine Holderness, Research & Impact Manager

Understanding our beneficiaries' needs informs our services, now and in the future.

After each workshop, we track change in four key areas:

- **Greater knowledge** of healthy and unhealthy relationships and domestic abuse
- **Enhanced skills** to practice healthy relationships and prevent unhealthy ones
 - **for children**, we ask about relevant soft skills including self-esteem, critical thinking and managing emotions
 - **for adults** with safeguarding responsibilities, we measure improved ability to safeguard and support children experiencing abuse
- **A positive shift** away from attitudes conducive to abusive relationships such as perpetrator excusing and victim blaming
- **Increased motivation** to improve own behaviour and be more supportive of others experiencing relationship abuse.

We record levels of participant engagement and enjoyment to make sure our programmes are fun, accessible and enriching for everybody, whatever their need and experience.

We have redeveloped the way we monitor, present and analyse our data to easily compare delivery across our regions. This is particularly important when we roll-out new programmes such as RE:SET and Relationship Goals; we want to see at a glance how participants are responding to new content and spot any changes needed straightaway.

We use pre-workshop surveys to benchmark participants' initial knowledge to track their progress across programmes. Hearing directly from children and their teachers about what matters to them is important for both our programme design and delivery, and our policy and influencing work. We use their insight as examples of what should be incorporated into the RSHE curriculum as part of our campaign for high quality prevention education. We share our impact and data with decision-makers to demonstrate what makes a difference to young people and the adults who support them.

We will continue to provide answers to policy-makers on what really works in preventing violence against women and girls, drawing on our evidence base and the voices of young people.



Catch up with Kate Lexén



We caught up with Kate Lexén, Tender's Director of Services, and asked her:

Tell us about your role at Tender

I support Tender's Children & Young People and Adult Services teams to deliver our fantastic programmes in schools and youth settings across the country. I help ensure the smooth delivery of our core programmes, the quality assurance of our curriculum, the development of new pieces of work and future strategic delivery plans. Last year, we delivered almost 400 projects and trainings, reaching over 32,000 children, young people and adults, so the delivery teams work extremely hard making all this happen!

What changes have you seen since you started working here?

I've been at Tender for almost a decade. To say that our work has grown and evolved in that time feels like a huge understatement. I've seen some innovative, ground-breaking pieces of work grow from a germ of an idea into a fully-fledged programme delivered across all four of our regions. RE:SET started life as a pilot in Croydon in 2017, and is now a robust, in-depth programme that's been delivered in over 70 schools across the country. Relationship Goals for neurodivergent young people, required us to develop an entire video game to support their learning alongside our drama-based workshops. And all this whilst delivering numerous core Healthy Relationships programmes and adult training sessions each year. And we're not stopping there – watch this space for more exciting programme development this year!

What are the biggest challenges facing Tender at the moment?

We've got big ambitions to develop our programmes further, reaching new cohorts, working with more beneficiaries across the country and to influence policy, so that one day every child in every school receives essential prevention work. But we can't do this without the generous support of funders, donors and decision-makers. The government has made the bold promise to halve VAWG in a decade, but this can only be achieved by prioritising quality prevention education with a robust RSHE curriculum delivered by specialist teachers in every school. We'll keep working with sector colleagues to shout this from the rooftops!

What do you love the most about your job?

Every time I visit a school or setting, I'm reminded how brilliant it really is and how each and every project has an impact. Lightbulb moments when a young person realises their behaviour may impact someone else or when a teacher is more confident challenging harmful attitudes in their school. As a mum of two girls, I am so proud of what Tender does daily, tangibly improving their future and those of every young person across the country. We're doing our bit to make their world a safer and happier place. It's a wonderful feeling!



Youth Board

2025 will be a big year for our Youth Board!

We're very happy to announce that in January we recruited 8 new members from across the country! During their onboarding they had the chance to meet with one of our trustees to discuss Tender's operations and plans.

In addition to our meetings, two Youth Board members also had the opportunity to attend our domestic abuse training sessions with City Bridge Foundation.

Sharing their Perspective on Masculinity

Youth Board members Libby, Ryan D, Ryan G, Kojo and Ellen attended Tender's "How to be a Boy" event at The Leathersellers' Hall in February. They were all brilliant advocates for Tender, chatting to guests, talking about our work and sharing their own perspective on the topics discussed.



Ellen chatting to Nicole Jacobs, Domestic Abuse Commissioner



Ryan D and Ryan G in the audience

Supporting Tender's 16 Days of Activism Campaign

"Sticks and stones may break my bones but words will never hurt me... or will they?" For our 16 Days of Activism campaign, Otilie from the Youth Board explores the true power of language.

[Click here to read her blog.](#)

"Being on the Youth Board has changed my own perspective on relationships and I now challenge my friends when I hear something problematic. I'll continue to talk about these topics and promote healthy relationships long after I leave the Youth Board."

Youth Board Member



Naemi

Exploring why people from ethnic minorities experience the highest rates of domestic abuse in the UK

by Naemi, Youth Board Member

Multiculturalism is a fundamental cornerstone in contemporary Britain. It draws on the key values of inclusion, equality, and democracy, upon which our society was built, and thrives today. As our population becomes more diverse, so too are the discussions around domestic abuse, and how it manifests itself across different cultures, faiths and backgrounds.

According to The Office for National Statistics, people from ethnic backgrounds experience higher rates of abuse than their white counterparts, with the highest rates of all coming from people with mixed heritage (7.9%). It's important we consider the cultural, social, legal and political factors behind the steady rise in domestic abuse numbers within ethnic minority communities.

We can start by looking globally at different cultural norms in which women are seen as being subservient to men and where gender inequality can lead to "honour" based violence. This is used to justify any violence towards (mainly) women as a means of restoring family honour and addressing disrespect to the family, particularly in the case of adultery. This is especially perilous, as it not only poses threats to women's safety but also cuts them off from support systems within their community.

BME victims suffer abuse for 1.5 times longer before seeking help, compared to those from a white British or Irish background. This may suggest underlying mistrust of the police amongst minority communities. Where their immigration status is an issue, many migrant victims fear that if they seek help, they risk deportation or other legal consequences. Together with language and financial barriers on top of inherent cultural norms, it's clear more needs to be done to address the problems that minorities face, when combating and reporting domestic abuse.

As a youth ambassador for Tender, I believe the onus is on us to shape the youth of today and protect the victims of tomorrow: by pushing for more accessible support resources and systems for all victims and survivors, by educating younger generations to promote cultures of love as opposed to cultures of hate, and ultimately, reducing patterns of inequality in domestic abuse as a whole.



Fundraising

“How to Be a Boy” Conversations with Men, 13th February at Leathersellers’ Hall

In front of an invited audience of Tender supporters and funders, Susie led an enthralling panel discussion on the challenges facing boys and young men today. The speakers were historian Dan Snow, former Chief Crown prosecutor Nazir Afzal OBE, Global Director of Inclusion Clifford Chance LLP Tiernan Brady and Jermaine Gayle, educationalist. We were delighted that our Patrons, Olivia Colman and Ed Sinclair joined us and thanked everybody for their support.

Discussions covered the challenges boys and young men face in a world shaped by influencers and identity politics, and how our views of masculinity have shifted throughout history. [You can listen to the whole conversation here.](#)

Thank you to our friends at Leathersellers for their generous hospitality.



With resource and focus, tackling male violence is a solvable problem”

Dan Snow

Support Francesca to run Lake Garda!



Here's to Francesca Lanzarotti, our wonderful Corporate Partnership Officer, who's challenged herself to run the Lake Garda half marathon this April for Tender. She's hoping to complete the course in under 2 hours.

Please support Francesca if you can; every penny helps. [Here is the link to her justgiving page.](#)



Westminster Foundation Grant



We're thrilled to receive essential funding from Westminster Foundation enabling us to deliver our healthy relationships programmes to secondary school aged boys in Westminster schools this year.

Sign up to Tender's new Corporate Newsletter

Are you interested in current domestic abuse and sexual harassment news and best practice in the workplace? Do you want to find out more about Tender's work in businesses and corporate collaborations?

Fill out this form to sign up to Tender's new corporate newsletter - a snapshot update straight to your inboxes, or email francesca@tender.org.uk. The first edition is launching in Spring 2025.



Communications & Media

Hip-hop icon presents RE:SET Award

Bradford primary school, Beckfoot Heaton welcomed local hip hop star to celebrate achieving their RE:SET Healthy Relationship Champion Setting Award.

At a special ceremony attended by staff and students, Headteacher Zoe Mawson accepted the award from acclaimed writer, rapper, world record breaking human beatboxer and Tender supporter, Testament.



He commented: *"I am so honoured to be part of celebrating those who make a difference in young people's lives. It inspires all of us to think carefully about who we want to be and how we treat others."*

The event was featured in local paper the [Telegraph and Argus](#).

Tender screens Netflix's Adolescence



Tender is joining forces with new Netflix drama Adolescence to raise awareness of the extremist misogyny rife in UK schools. Starring and co-created by Stephen Graham, Adolescence tells the story of 13-year-old Jamie Miller who is arrested for the violent murder of a teenage girl from his school.

Launched at a special screening at Soho Hotel, the partnership between Tender and Adolescence seeks to shed light on online misogyny and its dangerous impact on young people today. Susie McDonald MBE joined Adolescence co-creators Stephen Graham and Jack Thorne, and producer Jo Johnson to explore their motivation for the series and the action they hope it will inspire.



Jo Johnson, Jack Thorne, Susie McDonald, Stephen Graham & Hannah Walters

production. Adolescence is a dynamic portrayal of the troubling attitudes spreading through our schools – and the horrific impact they can have. Our young people are at serious risk – and it's time to take action."

Valentine's Day: #LoveLooksLike

This Valentine's Day, we gave young people the chance to get creative and show us what #LoveLooksLike to them.

Our national photography competition encouraged students from years 5 - 11 to snap unique images of whatever captures their heart - from friends and family to joyous holiday moments.

Actress and Tender Ambassador Amy-Leigh Hickman joined the campaign as our celebrity judge. The judging panel also included Tender CEO Susie McDonald, professional photographer Rob Baker Ashton, and Tender Youth Board members Ryan and Otilie.

The panel chose a winning photo by Zac and Fraser from Brentwood School who'll receive their awards at the Tender Awards 2025. Runners-up were Amber and Nathaniella, also from Brentwood School. Two photos by Axl and Mickey and by Braxden (all from Acle Academy) were chosen as finalists.

Read more about the competition and view the winning photos at <https://tender.org.uk/lovelookslike-winners/>



Nathaniella's Entry



Amber's Entry



Zac and Fraser's winning entry

"While it's crucial to understand issues like violence and abuse, it's equally important to see healthy relationships in action. Through these brilliant photos, we can highlight the magic of love in all its shapes and sizes. Thank you to all who entered!"

Susie McDonald, Tender CEO

Policy & Influence

We're expecting some important developments in government policy and guidance in 2025, in particular the publication of the VAWG (Violence Against Women & Girls) Strategy and an update on the review of the RSHE curriculum.



Home Office roundtable on the VAWG Strategy

We attended a stakeholder roundtable to comment on the Home Office's draft VAWG Strategy, due to be published in the first half of 2025. We have impressed on the Home Office the importance of ensuring prevention is a core pillar of their strategy, and there is appropriate funding for prevention work. We also stressed that the government's mission to halve VAWG in a decade will need close cross-departmental working, particularly with the Department for Education.

The Violence Reduction Unit and Croydon East MP see Tender's work first-hand

We were delighted that Director of London's VRU, Lib Peck, and MP for Croydon East, Natasha Irons, joined us at Forest Academy to see first-hand the positive impact of our Inclusive and Nurturing Schools Programme delivered in partnership with nurtureuk.

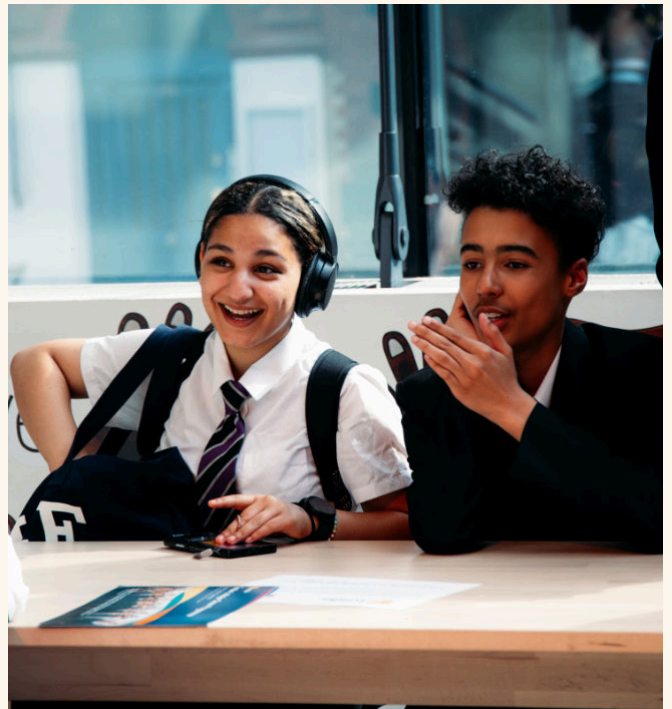
MP for East Croydon, Natasha Irons, said: *"It was wonderful to see the partnership between Forest Academy, Tender and the Mayor of London's Violence Reduction Unit in action. The programme run by Tender helps students nurture healthy relationships in all areas of their lives. It was wonderful to see children being given the tools to feel safe and supported, so they can thrive in school and the community more widely."*



Forest Academy School Visit by Lib Peck of London's VRU and Natasha Irons, MP Croydon East

Department for Education roundtable on the RSHE (Relationships Sex and Health Education) Curriculum

We were invited to take part in a roundtable on the RSHE curriculum, which is being reviewed alongside the whole curriculum. Along with other stakeholders in the sector who support schools to deliver the RSHE curriculum, we encouraged the DfE to ensure teachers are given effective training and ongoing support to deliver the RSHE curriculum appropriately, and give schools the funding and freedom to engage external partners to support them.



Advocating for meaningful funding for the VAWG sector

We submitted a representation to HM Treasury on the multi-year spending review, focusing on the essential investment required to halve VAWG within a decade. Without dedicated, cross-departmental and ringfenced funding, it will not be possible to achieve this mission. A prioritisation of funding for prevention work is essential, and this must start with a focus on education for young people to tackle the causes of VAWG before it can occur. It is also essential that funding is dedicated to effectively and consistently evaluating VAWG activities, with a cross-sector and cross-departmental approach to identifying and measuring relevant outcomes and mechanisms for sharing good practice.



Support Tender's work

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