

Lesson #2 Recognising

What is online sexual harassment?

13–17 years

⌚ 1 hour

Lesson outline:

Recognising online sexual harassment

In this lesson students will identify what online sexual harassment is and the range of behaviours it includes. Using discussion and interactive activities, students will reflect on the type of behaviour they may see online, explore issues of consent and how this helps to define online sexual harassment. In being able to recognise online sexual harassment, young people will be made more aware of how their own online behaviour may affect others.

Lesson objective:

To understand what types of behaviour constitute online sexual harassment.

Learning outcomes:

Students will be able to...

- Define the term online sexual harassment
- Recognise examples of online sexual harassment
- Understand the emotional impact online sexual harassment can have on those involved

Vocabulary:

'Harassment'
'Relationship'
'Consent'
'Sexual'
'Boundaries'

Before the lesson:

- Review the [Teaching Guide](#) for information about online sexual harassment and further advice on how to deliver these lessons.
- Work with the group to agree on a set of ground rules. See the Setting Ground Rules Lesson on p.4. Ensure these are clearly visible in the room.
- Refresh your knowledge of your school's reporting procedures. Speak to your Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) about how the school supports students who make a report.

Activity

Timing

Resources

Activity		Timing	Resources
Starter	Scenario comparison	10 min	
Activity 1	Defining online sexual harassment	10 min	Appendix 1 and 2
Activity 2	Flirting vs. harassment – Where's the line?	20 min	Appendix 3a Optional – string and pegs Appendix 3b
Activity 3	Emotions and impact	15 min	Appendix 4 and 5
Optional activity	Hot seat	45min	
Plenary	Shared learning	5 min	



Revisit the behaviour expectations students agreed on in the Ground Rules Lesson (#1).
Remind yourself of the sensitive content advice on p. 2-3.

Starter

🕒 10 mins

Display or read aloud the following scenarios and ask the group to reflect silently on how each one is different.

1. A photo was taken of a girl, Ama, hugging a boy, Callum, who was not her boyfriend. Ama and Callum are really close friends and always joke that people will think they are a couple. They have a running in-joke that Ama has lots of different boyfriends. Ama posted the photo online and Callum sent Ama a direct message saying 'slag (winking face emoji 😏)'.
2. A photo was taken of a girl, Ama, hugging a boy, Callum, who was not her boyfriend. It got sent around to people in their school and other schools in the area. People took screenshots and posted it to their online stories, commenting with terms like 'slut', 'slag' and 'cheater.'

Reflection questions:

- How would you describe Ama and Callum's relationship?
- Why did Callum send that message to Ama in Scenario 1?
- Callum sent his message privately, not publicly. Why?
- Why did other people take screenshots of Ama's photo in Scenario 2?
- Other people shared Ama's photo in Scenario 2. What effect do you think this had on Ama and Callum?
- Who is responsible for Ama's photo getting shared around with a wider group of people?
- What do you think the difference is between Callum's actions and the actions of the other young people?
- Would the consequences be different if it had been Callum who posted the photo, and not Ama?

As an alternative starter activity, or in addition to above, you could also watch Film 1, which explains what online sexual harassment is.



Supporting students with additional needs: Work with students on understanding each scenario and go through each one step by step. You may wish to draw each character to help illustrate the actions of each one. You could also provide a list of emotions and ask students to decide if they apply to Scenario 1 or Scenario 2, e.g. calm, upset, confused, excited etc.

Activity 1

🕒 10 mins

Explain that Scenario 2 is an example of peer-to-peer online sexual harassment, the focus of this lesson. Explain 'peer-to-peer' describes when it happens between young people in local communities, e.g. in school, or in a local area.

Divide the group into pairs. Give each pair a copy of the table found in **Appendix 1**, and ask them to think of words that are connected with each of the three terms ('online', 'sexual' and 'harassment').

Supporting students with additional needs: You may wish to provide the definition of online sexual harassment and ask students to annotate on the paper all the ideas or feelings that it makes them think of or feel.

Ask each pair to think of their own definition of online sexual harassment, when it happens between young people that know each other. Take some suggestions and highlight any answers that focus on online behaviour of an unwanted nature.



Remind students of the ground rules, and the need to keep individuals' names and experiences out of the discussion and definitions.

Ask the group to compare their own definition to the definition and additional information in Appendix 2.



Educator's notes: In Scenario 1, Callum is able to comment on Ama's photo because they have a shared mutual trust and understanding. Ama had a part to play in creating the joke in Callum's comment and the joke is private so only Ama and Callum can share in it. In Scenario 2, Ama has not given her consent for her photo to be shared publicly, or for the other people to comment on it. Due to the sexual nature of the comments, these can be categorised as unwanted sexual behaviour, making this an example of online sexual harassment. Ama would possibly feel humiliated, judged and sexualised – further reasons to classify this behaviour as online sexual harassment. If it's unwanted, it's unacceptable.



Consent: When creating their definition of online sexual harassment, students may bring up the issue of consent, or lack thereof. Consent plays a key role in the issue of online sexual harassment, as when consent has not been received it can cause people to feel victimised and discriminated against.

Consent is defined as “an agreement made by someone with the freedom and ability to decide something.”

In practice, consent is not a signed contract or agreement. Consent can be asked for and received in a number of ways and does not only apply to sexual activity. When anyone is about to do something that affects another person, they need to be sure they receive a clear and enthusiastic ‘yes’. In an online space, this can become more complicated because the physical and verbal cues are often missing. For young people, the key is to understand that if they are in any doubt about the consequences of their online actions, the best thing to do is ask if it’s okay. Consent is built on open communication, knowing the boundaries of your relationships and being certain that what you may be about to do is acceptable behaviour.



For further resources around consent, see the [Teaching Guide p.16](#).



Further challenge

Ask pupils to write a definition of consent, and how this relates to online sexual harassment.

Think about:

- Why is consent important?
- How do you know if someone gives their consent for an online action? How do you know when they don’t?
- Does consent look different when it applies to different media e.g photos, comments, online conversations etc?
- If someone isn’t sure about whether it’s okay to post something, what is the best thing to do?

Activity 2

🕒 20 mins

Hand out scenarios from **Appendix 3a**. Explain to the group they will now be using the definition of online sexual harassment to help them decide where each scenario should be placed on the following spectrum:

‘fun and flirting’ ‘harassment and abuse’

Discuss what makes the ends of the spectrum different – ‘fun and flirting’ includes the presence of consent, whereas ‘harassment and abuse’ does not.

You may wish to display the previous definition of online sexual harassment to refer back to during the activity.

See **Appendix 3b** for teaching points for each scenario.

This activity can be run in a number of different ways:

1. Working individually or in pairs: Give the students the scenarios, (pre-cut to save time). Ask them to place the scenarios on the spectrum. Discuss as a group.
2. Working as a group: Draw an imaginary line across the room to represent the spectrum. Read out one scenario at a time. Ask the group to stand at the point they feel best represents each scenario. Discuss as a group.
3. Working as a group: Attach a piece of string across the room. Ask the group to discuss where they think each scenario should be placed and attach their scenarios to the string, using a peg or paperclip. Discuss as a group.



Discussion questions:

After students have considered some, or all of the scenarios, facilitate a discussion around their choices:

- Which scenarios were easy to categorise? Which were difficult? Why?
- Why might different people have different opinions on whether each scenario is fun and flirting, or harassment?
- What could the characters have done to check for consent in each scenario?

Not every scenario is easy to categorise - highlight any examples that divided the group’s decision. Encourage the group to discuss the reasons behind their choices and to think about how different people will have different boundaries when it comes to what is flirting and what is harassment.

It’s important to acknowledge how complicated and personalised these issues can be. Conclude the discussion around each scenario with a comment on how the character could have checked they had consent beforehand – this might have been through a direct question, or through knowing the boundaries of the relationship.

**Further challenge**

Extra discussion questions:

What makes online sexual harassment different from cyberbullying?

Online sexual harassment has a sexual element to the behaviour.

Do you think boys or girls experience more online sexual harassment? Why?

Online sexual harassment can happen to anyone, but research suggests that for some forms of online sexual harassment girls are more likely to be targeted than boys e.g. 'slut-shaming'. These incidents often result in more negative outcomes for girls, however this is not to say boys are not victimised. Girls and boys can both feel pressures to conform to different stereotypes. This is discussed further in Lesson Plan #3.

Think about the person carrying out the online sexual harassment in each scenario. Why do they behave in that way?

Much of the unhealthy behaviour that plays out in online sexual harassment is shaped by the perceived 'norms' within peer groups, gender dynamics and wider cultural influences. The pressure to participate, and the widespread cultural value placed on sexual appeal can be another factor.

Who do you think has the final say on whether something is online sexual harassment or not – the victim, the perpetrator or bystanders (people who saw it happen but were not involved)?

If a young person feels they have been sexually harassed online, their experience is valid and they have a right to be taken seriously. However, young people may not always identify themselves as victims, or want to be called a victim as they may not want to be defined by the behaviour of others.

Activity 3

🕒 15 mins

Ask: 'Think back to Ama and Callum in Scenario 2. How do you think that situation made them feel?'

Take examples and record these somewhere visible.

Once the group has thought of several examples, show them the following list to compare their answers to.

Online sexual harassment can make a person feel:

- Threatened
- Exploited
- Coerced
- That their dignity is lost
- Humiliated or degraded
- Upset
- Sexualised
- Discriminated against (because of their gender or sexual orientation)
- Feel guilty or like they are to blame

Work through the list of emotions to check the students understand what they mean. You could provide, or ask for, examples for each one.

Use this opportunity to stress that to make a person feel any of those emotions is never acceptable, offline or online, and depending on the situation, can break the law. Online sexual harassment does not have to be accepted as a normal part of growing up.



Supporting students with additional needs: You may wish to print out Scenario 2 and ask students to draw or write how each character might be feeling. Use the list of emotions above and work through these with the students to come up with a definition. For example; coerced is feeling like someone is making you do something you don't want to do.

Explain that the group will now hear Ama's story, who they first heard about in the Starter activity.

Play the recording of [Ama's Story](#), or read out the transcript (Appendix 4). Pause at the markers indicated on the transcript.

At each pause, ask the students to record how they think Ama is feeling on **Appendix 5**. They could do this using a variety of different media – text, colours, images, symbols etc.

Optional activity

🕒 45 mins

May be suitable for an extra 45 minute class

Hot-seat

Work in small groups, or as a whole class. Ask the students how each character played a part in this scenario.

Characters:

- Ama – the main character who experiences online sexual harassment
- Callum – Ama's best friend, who gets targeted by the online sexual harassment too
- Alfie – Ama's classmate, who she suspects spread the rumours and the photo
- The bystanders who shared the rumours and the photo

The students should decide on a character and the point in the story they want to focus on, before taking it in turns to 'hot-seat' the different characters involved. The group can ask the hot seat character questions about their experience and feelings. Students may wish to see a copy of the transcript as a prompt (Appendix 4). Remind the group of the ground rules that they originally agreed.

There are some further prompts below to help guide the session:

- The audience can ask a maximum of 6 questions.
- The hot-seat character can spend no more than 1 minute in the hot-seat.
- Ask open ended questions.
- Respect each other's performances.

Suggested hot-seat questions:

- What's been going on?
- Have you done anything about it? Why?
- How are you feeling?
- Why do you think you are being treated this way?
- Have you spoken to anyone about it?
- What would you like to happen next?

After the hot-seat is complete, ask students to physically 'shake off' their characters and lead a debrief about what they learnt from the activity.

Plenary

🕒 5 mins

Arrange students in a circle on chairs. Nominate yourself as the first 'director'. In this role, stand in the middle of the circle and direct students to switch seats if the following statement applies to them:

Everyone who learnt something new about online sexual harassment.

Include yourself in the statement and take a chair. This means the last student standing will take on the role of 'director'. It is their turn to give a statement, and the cycle repeats for as long as you wish.

Suggested summary statements:

- Everyone who is still confused about something from today's lesson.
- Everyone who found the discussion around consent helpful.
- Everyone who wants to learn more about healthy relationships.

Make a note of students' responses and address at the next appropriate moment.

Ask: 'Think back to Ama's story. What 3 pieces of advice would you give her to help make the situation better?' Students could write these as messages to Ama and read each other's suggestions.

Online	Sexual	Harrassment



Online	Sexual	Harrassment

Online Sexual Harassment

is unwanted sexual behaviour on any online app, game or service.

Gender

68% say people will think badly about a girl if her nude image is posted online, in comparison to **40%** for boys.
(source: deshame.eu)

31% of girls have received unwanted sexual messages and images, in comparison to **11%** of boys.
(source: deshame.eu)

It can

make a person feel threatened, exploited, coerced, humiliated, upset, sexualised or discriminated against.

This harassment could use a variety of online content such as images, videos, posts, messages, comments and pages. It can happen in public or in private online, and can happen across several different online spaces at the same time. It can overlap with offline harassment or abuse too.

Amongst young people, it typically takes place in schools, or in local communities. These people often know each other.

There is no 'typical' victim, it can happen to anyone and everyone can experience it differently.

However, **some groups** of people may be more likely to be targeted with online sexual harassment, or have more negative consequences due to overlapping with other forms of discrimination they may face. It's this complex combination of different types of discrimination which means they may experience online sexual harassment in a unique way.

Race and ethnicity

Black women are **84%** more likely to receive abusive tweets than white women
(source: amnesty.org)

Asian women are **70%** more likely to be mentioned in tweets with ethnic, racial and religious slurs than white women
(source: amnesty.org)

68% of 13-17s have witnessed people using homophobic or transphobic language online (mean words about being gay, lesbian or transgender/sexual), with **30%** of LGBT young people being bullied with comments, messages, videos or pictures that were mean, untrue, secret or embarrassing.

LGBT: lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender/sexual

(source: deshame.eu and Stonewall School Report 2017)

Disabilities

38% of young people with disabilities said they had been targeted with online hate, compared with **21%** of those with no disability.
(source: UKSIC Safer Internet Day report 2016)

Religion

In 2018, **51%** of religious hate crimes were targeted against Muslims, **12%** were targeted at Jewish people and **5%** against Christian people.

(source: Home Office Hate Crime report 2017/18)

Step Up,

Speak Up!

Put an end to online sexual harassment

deshame.eu

1 Nifa was messaging with a boy. She really liked him, and was hoping their friendship could turn into a relationship. He asked for nudes, she wasn't sure, so avoided the question. He kept asking and asking, so she blocked him.

2 Kamil posts a few selfies online, then receives some anonymous comments describing his body in a sexual way and making sexual suggestions.

3 Amy was born a girl, but identifies as a boy. Amy wants to be known as Aidan and for people at school to refer to him as 'he' and 'him'. Aidan changes his online profile names to his new name. Some people 'like' the change and some make comments asking about it.

4 Kira gets sent a picture of male genitals. The sender is a friend of a friend. She shows her friend and they laugh about it, then she deletes it.

5 Sasha's boyfriend kisses someone else while they are dating. She shares around nude pictures of him as she is upset and wants to hurt his feelings too.

6 Jordan's classmates have a running joke that he is attracted to their teacher, Mr. Morgan. They make an Instagram account dedicated to pictures they make of Mr Morgan and Jordan together, and add emojis that suggest they're doing sexual things together.

7 Dan has a new girlfriend who is 2 years younger than him. His friends post comments online calling him a 'paedophile.'

8 Hassan gets photographed pretending to kiss one of his male friends. Someone adds heart emojis and sends it around school with a comment that says they are 'disgusting'.

9 Someone set up a fake account in Somto's name and used it to ask people in his year group for nudes. Somto denied it was him but no-one believed him.

10 Maya takes a selfie with her best friend. She comments on it with 'love you slag xxx'.

11 Jamie posts a video of himself playing football. The girl he likes sends him a message saying 'looking good' and he messages back with 'thanks, but you're the one who always looks good'.

12 Hamir and Laura are in the first stages of a relationship. They text each other a lot, and have quite flirty conversations. Hamir tells Laura she's 'hot.'

13 Someone films a group of friends in their school forcing Zahra, a girl in the year below, to touch AJ's genitals. The video gets shared around school.

14 Zoe has feelings for her friend Lola. She thinks Lola feels the same but she's not sure. She finds it awkward to talk about it face to face, but online she has the confidence to ask Lola about how she feels.

Lola is glad Zoe wants to talk about it.

15 Rumours get sent around school that Oli is gay. He gets annoyed by the gossip so sets his profile to 'interested in: men' to stop everyone guessing. People screenshot it and send it around, but later the rumours stop.

1 Harassment.
The requests were **unwanted** and continued even when Nifa did not respond.

2 Harassment
Kamil has **not given his consent** to receive those comments, as he does not know who the person contacting him is.

3 It depends.
Why have people liked the name change? What sort of comments are posted? If they are discriminatory or transphobic (mean words about changing your gender), the behaviour could be **harassment**. If they were supportive, it **may not be harassment**.

4 It depends.
The picture did not seem to upset Kira, but the image was **unwanted**. By showing it to a friend without the sender's consent, is this **harassment**?

5 Harassment.
The images were shared to **purposefully hurt** Sasha's ex-boyfriend.

6 It depends.
Is Jordan 'in' on the joke? If he finds the joke **uncomfortable** or **embarrassing** in any way it could be **harassment**.

7 Harassment.
The term 'paedophile' has strong **negative sexual meaning** and is being used to shame Dan for his relationship.

8 Harassment.
The language used is **very negative and homophobic** (showing a dislike or prejudice against people who are gay or lesbian.)

9 Harassment.
Somto did not give his **consent** for a fake account to be set up in his name, and the behaviour is **embarrassing** Somto.

10 Not harassment.
The context suggests the sexual language is being used in a **familiar and friendly** way.

11 Not harassment.
The comments are part of a respectful conversation, and are **not unwanted**.

12 Not harassment.
The comments are part of a respectful conversation, and are **not unwanted**.

13 Harassment.
Zahra was **forced** to touch AJ and did not give her **consent** for the video to be shared.

14 Not harassment.
The comments are part of a respectful conversation, and are **not unwanted**.

15 Harassment.
Oli is annoyed by the comments and the gossip is **unwanted**. He did not give **consent** for people to share screenshots of his profile.

Transcript of [Ama's story](#)

So, it was at Samira's house party. Everyone from school was there, including Alfie. Me and Alfie have this weird thing where we always kind of flirt in Maths, but don't really hang out the rest of the time because we don't have any other lessons together. Anyway, we got on okay, and I thought we were friends.

I saw him at the party, and he came over and we started chatting. It was nice not to be talking about Maths! He was getting pretty flirty and leaning in quite close. I liked him, but not in that way, and didn't want to give him the wrong impression, so I made an excuse and went and found my best friend Callum, who was chilling out upstairs.

I don't know how the next part happened. Apparently, someone must have seen me messing about with Callum, and thought we were a couple. We are definitely not! I've known Callum since primary school and we've always been best friends, but nothing more. I'm pretty sure he's in to guys anyway...

1. PAUSE

So, someone took a picture of me and Callum hugging. The next day, this picture was getting sent around, along with a rumour that we had done some stuff...you know, sexual things. This wasn't true at all. I couldn't believe what people were saying – most of it was aimed at me, saying I was a slag and a whore and all that. But even Callum got some things said about him, like "he's into girls after all" and all this mean stuff.

2. PAUSE

I felt so humiliated; it was so embarrassing. I had only been hugging my best friend, but it felt like I had done something wrong. Some people who I thought were my friends started joining in online, and calling me those names. Maybe they thought it was funny. People even took screenshots of my other photos and put extra emojis and pictures on them, making out like I was flirting and doing things with loads of other guys too.

Obviously, I denied it, but not many people believed me. I thought I'd just try and ignore it. The strange thing was that Alfie started being a bit distant, and not as friendly anymore. He never brought it up, but I'm guessing it was him who started the rumours.

3. PAUSE

A few weeks later, I was in my room one evening and Callum texted me to say there was a nude photo being shared around and people were saying it was me. It wasn't, but whoever started it must have found some random nude online and posted it saying it was me. It was so horrible, everyone started messaging me and sending it to me, asking if it was true. I just wanted to hide from everyone- I definitely didn't want to face going in to school the next day. It was awful. I couldn't believe someone would do this. I felt so helpless. I'm really grateful that Callum stuck by me and supported me though all of it.

It happened a while ago, but I still feel nervous that someone is going to bring it up and it will start all over again. Why don't people realise this type of thing isn't okay?

4. PAUSE

