Speak out. Stay safe.

Safeguarding children with additional needs and disabilities

Guidance for schools

NSPCC

IMAGE IN ACTION

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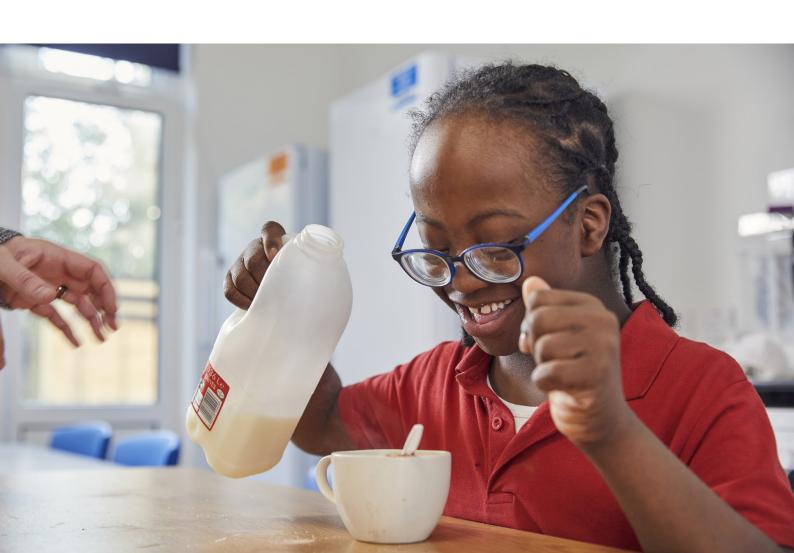
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Introduction

We want to support schools to make sure safe and happy children are at the heart of every school.

Speak out. Stay safe. materials for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), Additional Support Needs (ASN) and Additional Learning Needs (ALN) schools, units or bases can help your pupils understand what abuse is and provide them with strategies to keep themselves safe. This booklet supports schools in thinking about how to set up the *Speak out. Stay safe.* SEND/ASN/ALN programme.

Developed jointly by the NSPCC and Image in Action, the six-session programme has been designed to be delivered in partnership with NSPCC staff and volunteers. The programme uses practical activities and engaging methods to support pupils as well as their teachers, learning support assistants, mentors and other staff in education. Parents may also find some of the techniques and activities useful in helping to keep their children safe.

The materials are aimed at primary school children in years 5 and 6 (England and Wales), primary 6 and 7 (Scotland) and years 6 to 7 (Northern Ireland).

Image in Action is a specialist organisation with over 30 years experience of working with pupils with learning disabilities. The activities in this programme have been successfully trialled with a range of pupils and schools.

What is Speak out. Stay safe. for SEND/ASN/ ALN schools, units or bases?

The focus of the programme is for children to understand what abuse is and to feel supported and able to talk to trusted adults. It uses the strategy of a safe circle, to help pupils understand which trusted adults they can turn to if they have worries.

The character of 'Buddy' is also used to encourage them to speak out.

We understand that pupils will have varying needs and abilities and will respond to different methods, materials and strategies, so the programme can be adapted easily to suit the needs and abilities of your pupils and maximize their learning.

It's also important to go through the programme at a pace that works for your class, so you may want to split the sessions over more weeks, or select activities from the sessions.

The programme will fit with the curriculum in many special schools, bases or units, covering aspects of personal wellbeing including emotional intelligence, communication skills, self-esteem and self-awareness. These are the skills that give pupils the confidence to recognise healthy relationships and to ask for help if they are worried or have problems.

Some of the interactive methods we suggest may be familiar to you and teachers working with SEND/ASN/ALN already. However there may be other suggestions that you have not tried before.

These materials are intended for children with moderate learning disabilities, autism spectrum conditions or other additional learning needs in special schools, units or bases. Schools Coordinators and volunteers from the NSPCC will support staff to deliver the programme.

In summary

- This is a resource for children with special educational needs that teachers can use with their pupils, with support from NSPCC staff and volunteers.

- The resource contains a programme of six sessions with activities and resources that can be selected and used as appropriate to meet a wide range of needs and abilities.

- There are many practical activities and engaging methods that can help pupils to learn effectively.

- There are stories to help pupils understand physical abuse, bullying, emotional abuse, sexual abuse and neglect – all the stories have positive outcomes.

- There is guidance available to help teachers and other education professionals deliver this programme and take the time needed to ensure the safeguarding messages are effectively delivered.

The aims of the programme

For pupils:

- improving their self-awareness

- supporting them to learn about their emotions

- increasing understanding of how feelings and behaviour are linked

- developing skills for building and maintaining safe and appropriate relationships

- developing their self-esteem and confidence through improving and practising their skills

- supporting them to learn about and recognise different types of abuse

- giving them strategies to speak out about their worries

- showing them how their school is a safe place

- identifying trusted adults in and out of school to talk to about their worries.

For schools:

- supporting teachers to address safeguarding with pupils

- supporting social and emotional aspects of the curriculum in an accessible format

- providing a creative bank of activities and resources

- supporting safeguarding across all aspects of the school.

Who is the programme for?

This programme can work for pupils with moderate learning disabilities, additional learning needs and/or autism. It has been created primarily for pupils in years 5 and 6 (England and Wales), primary 6 and 7 (Scotland) and years 6 to 7 (Northern Ireland) but can be adapted to use with other age groups.

As these groups can contain a wide range of needs and abilities, we have tried to offer adaptions to activities within each lesson plan.

The topics covered in the programme are designed to be useful for a wide range of pupils and it will be how you choose to use the materials that will vary; your delivery, level of explicitness or explanation needed, communication techniques used by your pupils and how your support staff can assist.

For example, a group with many ASD pupils may need further explanation about why these skills are important and how particular learning from a story can be generalised.

Grouping pupils for the programme

Grouping pupils according to their needs, ability and understanding will be beneficial so that they can all go through the activities in a similar way and at a similar pace.

In certain circumstances you will need to consider how best to support a pupil before he/she participates in the programme, such as:

• safeguarding issues within their family

• a known experience of abuse

• particularly complex learning needs

• they are attending counselling.

These will need to be considered when deciding on the best group to place the pupil in.

It's important to think about group dynamics beforehand. Think about which children will work well together, who may dominate, or who may be overwhelmed by others.

Gender is also a key part of the sessions. Try to keep a balance of genders in the group, and avoid having just one girl or boy in any group.

Talking to parents, carers and staff about the programme

Talking to parents and carers

Parents and carers often want support to help keep their children safe and have successful relationships based on self-respect and respect for others. They may have questions about the programme and want to learn more about why your school is delivering it and what's involved.

We have a template letter for parents and carers to tell them about the programme, and we suggest you invite anyone with questions to contact a key teacher who can explain more about it. You may also decide to invite parents to a meeting to share information about the programme.

Linking with Relationships, Health and Sex Education

Session four of the programme covers sexual abuse, and can link with Relationships, Health and Sex Education (or nation equivalent).

It can be helpful if pupils have learned about public and private parts of the body, appropriate behaviour and safe relationships prior to the session.

The activities in session four can be expanded to include the names for private body parts, however this may then be considered as Sex Education which parents have a right to withdraw their child from (please refer to your nation's policy on this). So you may need to adapt materials as appropriate.

Talking to staff

We recommend you tell other staff who support your class about the programme – explaining it's sensitive content and the need for the privacy of the sessions to be respected.

You may find it helpful to print out some information from this guidance and share it with the teaching assistants who will be helping you to deliver this programme.

It may be useful to involve other staff such as:

- inclusion, therapy and safeguarding teams
- learning mentors
- family support workers
- school nurses.

There will be an overlap with the programme and the issues these members of staff deal with and many of the pupils will be in touch with these elements of the school network of support.

Safety

The group needs to be a safe space on a physical and emotional level for both staff and pupils. You may find it helpful to include a clear statement about personal questions in the ground rules before you start.

Staff may have concerns that they will be asked challenging questions, and want some guidance on handling these situations. It's always acceptable to say "that's a good question and I can answer that one next session/when we have more time/in private after this session."

Disclosure

It will always be the responsibility of the school to ensure that all of their safeguarding procedures are followed where an NSPCC staff member or volunteer has reported a child protection concern and/or a child welfare issue, as outlined in the NSPCC Schools Agreement.

The programme itself

The focus of the programme is for children to understand what abuse is, and to feel supported and able to talk to trusted adults.

- There are six sessions for teachers to lead with their classes.

- There is detailed guidance for teachers with explanation of the key techniques used in the course.

- There are plans, activities and resources that a teacher needs to deliver the *Speak out. Stay safe.* programme.

- Each session defines its aims and intended outcomes for pupils.

- It's important to deliver all the elements of the session, including reinforcing the empowerment messages and delivering the anti-abuse messages.

- There are suggestions for additional activities to either simplify an activity or add challenge so staff can use the best approach that suits their pupils' needs.

- The programme builds up skills and understanding so we would suggest following the pattern of sessions as proposed.

Preparation

Identify key staff members who will be relevant to the programme, such as:

- a member of the senior leadership team who will oversee the project

- PSHE lead

- safeguarding officer.

Source information such as:

- disclosure procedure

- school safeguarding policy

- schools Relationships, Health and Sex Education policy/ies

- personal care, touch and/or pupil handling policies.

Methods

The programme uses interactive and practical techniques such as circle work, games, activities, stories, use of characters, role-play, small group discussion, skill demonstration and practise.

The methods used are engaging and memorable, with a variety of clear illustrations and visuals to support them.

Circle work within the session develops skills and promotes understanding about being stronger together and safe in school, while the use of ground rules, understanding of boundaries and distancing techniques help pupils feel safe enough to discuss the topics.

Topics and content

The sessions create a positive environment by using the friendly character of Buddy, the idea of a safe circle, and clear ground rules.

They also use stories and characters to present some of the sensitive issues around abuse in a way that's appropriate to help pupils understand.

There are stories about four child characters – each highlighting the different types of abuse: physical abuse, emotional abuse and bullying, sexual abuse and neglect.

The pupils don't need to discuss their personal lives in the sessions, however this work may lead to children wanting to speak out about their own situations. It's important that staff understand the school's safeguarding policy and have a plan if a pupil discloses abuse as part of the session.

The idea of a safe circle is a key part of the programme for pupils. Teachers should identify relevant staff (such as the class teacher and teaching assistants, the school's safeguarding officer and deputy head teacher) and provide photos of them so that they can be identified on the class 'safe circle poster'.

We suggest that your school provides a Buddy card system so that the children can present a card if they want to discuss anything with a trusted adult in school.

Definitions of the five types of abuse

Emotional abuse

- When an adult deliberately hurts a child's feelings.

- This could be by calling someone names, making fun of them or making them feel bad about themselves.

- Seeing or hearing parents or carers hurt each other can also make a child feel bad.

- It hurts on the inside and doesn't leave a mark that can be seen.

Bullying

- Bullying is when children are mean and unkind to each other.

- It can include a child being pushed, hit, teased, threatened or called names. This usually happens more than once.

- It can also happen online or by text. This is called cyber bullying.

Physical abuse

- This is when someone deliberately hurts or injures a child's body.

- This could be by kicking, biting, hitting, shaking or leaving marks.

- Physical abuse may cause pain, cuts, bruising and/or broken bones.

Sexual abuse

- When a child is being made, asked or rewarded for doing anything with their body that frightens or worries them.

- It can involve touching, kissing or being made to show private parts of the body or being made to do this to another person.

- It can involve being shown inappropriate films or pictures in books, magazines, on TV, mobile phones or the internet.

Neglect

- When a child is not being looked after by their parent or carer.

- When a child does not get enough to eat, drink or the right kind of clothing.

- When a child is left on their own for too long.

Staffing the programme

This checklist can help schools think about teachers and support staff who might be well suited to facilitate and support this course:

- Who works with KS2 pupils with moderate learning disabilities? key stage 2 (England and Wales), primary 5-7 (Northern Ireland), primary 4-7 (Scotland) and key stage 2 (Wales)

- Who has a positive and trusting relationship with the pupils?

- Who enjoys drama, storytelling and playing games?

- Who is trained/comfortable talking about sensitive topics such as abuse and sexuality with pupils?

- Who has experience in safeguarding/PSHE/ Relationships, Health and Sex Education?

- Who has the time to gather the resources and prepare the course and the scope to be a consistent and reliable presence in the group each week?

- Who has the necessary skills in reflective practice, leading groups and creative working?

- If there is a mixed gender pupil group for the programme then can the staff team reflect that?

There will need to be at least two school staff involved in all sessions, which supports:

- pupil safety and accountability when sensitive topics such as abuse are discussed or if pupils disclose personal information which might require further investigation

- one-to-one support for pupils when needed

- the use of drama (having a colleague for acting and role-play demonstrations)

- opportunity for better observation and monitoring of pupils' responses and allowing reflective discussion

- staff acting as witnesses to the aims and content of the programme should a difficulty or complaint be raised.

Preparation for staff who will deliver the Speak out. Stay safe. programme

- Identify staff with interest, skills or experience in safeguarding.

- Create a supportive team to deliver the programme.

The *Speak out. Stay safe.* programme addresses complex topics and staff may have difficult personal feelings about abuse. It is important that staff are well supported to deliver this programme.

Teachers and teaching assistants need to feel confident enough to talk about the topics addressed in the programme and be consistent across its delivery so that every child gets the opportunity to learn how to speak out and stay safe. Some school staff may find it difficult to deliver the content about abuse, and schools could allow staff to opt out.

A useful way of framing this option is for the team lead to say that there is sensitive material in this programme that can affect individuals for a range of reasons, and any member of staff can opt out of delivery without needing to explain why.

Before starting the programme, staff can discuss the content that will be covered including the abuse topics, acknowledge feelings and recognise any experience of dealing with this subject in school and with individual children.

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Setting up the sessions

A checklist before you begin:

- [ ] Allocate time and support for your staff team to discuss preparation, delivery and outcomes.
- [ ] Agree how to present the programme/inform parents and carers (perhaps send out the suggested parent/carer letter and/or set up a meeting).
- [ ] Consider how *Speak out. Stay safe.* fits in with your regular PSHE/Relationships, Health and Sex Education delivery and circle time, and liaise with the relevant staff leads.
- [ ] Re-read the school's safeguarding policy, highlight the procedures in the school's safeguarding policy and ensure all staff are familiar with these.
- [ ] Emphasise the procedure for informing the safeguarding officer in the event of a disclosure.
- [ ] Pick an appropriate space for the sessions to take place.
- [ ] Decide what to do for a child who has a known history of abuse – how can that child participate?
- [ ] Notify other school staff when sessions are happening, maybe have a 'please do not interrupt' sign on the door during the sessions.
- [ ] Become familiar with the programme materials.
- [ ] Gather any resources you may need.
- [ ] Identify key staff for the 'safe circle poster' - prepare photos.

Setting up the room

The room for the *Speak out. Stay safe.* sessions needs to be:

- [ ] private – ensure other staff understand not to interrupt the sessions.
- [ ] large enough to have the chairs in a circle and for small group work.
- [ ] available for use for each *Speak out. Stay safe.* session.
- [ ] set up and arranged ready to begin the session, with chairs in a circle and tables moved aside.

What's involved

Staff roles

Speak out. Stay safe. is a practical programme. Staff can lead by example, modelling the ground rules, how to discuss these sensitive topics and taking part in activities. A member of staff can be asked to note individual responses to track learning and identify any concern for an individual.

Group work

Working with pupils as a group has many benefits. It lets children practise skills and provides a forum for pupils to learn from and support each other.

The process of the group

- Each group is unique and the session plan can be adapted to respect this.
- The pace of learning is set by the group.
- There are six sessions. However sessions can take place over two or three lessons to accommodate the understanding of the class.
- The work can be slowed down and repeated or expanded to reflect ability.
- You can be creative with the format and activities.
- Do try to cover all the topics in the order in the course as the activities in each session build on learning from the previous one.

For each session you will need:

- a summary sheet
- a detailed session plan describing the activities and detailing the relevant slides or resources
- an evaluation form for staff
- presentation slides
- the resources needed for each session as described on the summary sheet (in sessions 2-5 this includes story scripts).

Each session should:

- have a clear structure
- follow the same format each week
- be familiar for pupils especially when the content may be challenging
- use circle work at its core.

Each session includes:

- defined aims and objectives
- an introduction
- ground rules
- a recap and session objectives
- a starter
- a main theme
- plenary activities
- close.

Resources

- There are resources for each session which you can print out and use for the activities with the pupils (Sessions 1-6).
- Sometimes you are asked to gather some physical props (e.g. Session 5 requires a toothbrush and toothpaste).

PowerPoint slides

- There are slide presentations for every session to support the activities in the session plans (Sessions 1-6).
- Explanation notes are added to some slides for clarity.

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Methods and techniques used in the programme

Method 1: 'Distancing' the work

The *Speak out. Stay safe.* programme covers sensitive topics. We don't intend to discuss the personal lives of the pupils in detail during the group session. We use an interactive approach but one that distances the work from the personal by using:

- the development of child characters
- storytelling
- detailed illustrations with clear messages
- role-playing and acting
- resources that can be used as masks or puppets
- props and physical prompts.

Through this approach pupils can:

- listen to stories about difficult topics
- realise that the stories are about children like them
- hear about a wide range of emotions experienced by the characters
- give advice to the characters
- understand consequences of behaviour and actions
- transfer the learning about what happens in the stories/sessions to their own situations without needing to share personal information in the group
- ask their own questions, but in role as a character so they can feel safe about raising an issue
- practise skills by speaking as a character.

Method 2: Joining in

Many activities encourage participation but we don't want to 'put children on the spot' in an uncomfortable way.

- Pupils can choose what they contribute
- You can ask pupils to work in pairs
- Even role-plays don't need one person to play each role; a pupil can have a helper and swap places with them if they get stuck
- Staff can always go first in an activity or work alongside a pupil.

Method 3: Personalising the work

A core element of the programme is the safe circle technique, that helps pupils identify key members of staff to talk to on a one-to-one basis if they have a worry.

The safe circle poster with staff photos can be put up in the classroom as a prompt for pupils to seek out you and your staff if they need personal support after any of the sessions, or at any other time in school.

In addition, you may want to ensure that your pupils have understood the content of the sessions and check this out with individuals after the session. You may be concerned about how an individual pupil has reacted and need to check this out with them after the session.

The programme relies on staff chosen to lead the sessions knowing the pupils, their care needs and their home circumstances to a certain degree. This background information can be very helpful in sessions, for example, it may be important to consider terminology used in session 4 where 'mum, dad or my carers who help me in the bathroom or toilet' (Slide 7) are referenced, as some children may need explicit acknowledgement of the circumstances. This could be as a general comment in the group of pupils or specifically discussed 1-1 with an individual pupil and by referencing who in their home might perform that type of personal care e.g. foster carers or a specific extended family member who takes on that role for the child.

Knowledge of the pupils will be of particular benefit in assessing and responding to concerns raised by the pupils. In session 6 there are discussions of big and small worries; children need to be encouraged to speak about all worries.

You can respond to or note all worries raised and consider, in the case of seemingly small worries, if they add to any wider picture of safeguarding information.

Good knowledge of the pupils will allow staff to respond and support them sensitively e.g. some pupils on the autism spectrum may need help to recognise and process small issues.

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Technique 1: Buddy

Buddy is the hero character for the *Speak out. Stay safe.* programme. He's shaped like a speech bubble and represents the importance of speaking out.

Buddy provides a memorable but fun figure that pupils can think about at other times, not just during the sessions.

> **Top Tips**
>
> • Practise how to manipulate the Buddy prop and bring it to life.
>
> • You can use the technique "Buddy says..." and "Buddy thinks..."

• •

Technique 2: Child characters

There are figure illustrations of four children throughout the sessions, named in the stories. Sam, Mo, Guy and Ali.

These characters represent ordinary children like the pupils in your group. Their stories cover five different types of abuse, so it is important that the pupils relate to the characters but not too closely. There is a positive resolution to the difficulties in all the stories.

The school/teacher can choose other names for the characters if these are familiar names in the school, or a teacher/pupil in the class already has one of these names.

We suggest the child characters are printed out, laminated and cut out, so when they are introduced in Session 1 you can hold up the character and use them as small puppets.

Usually pupils are keen to engage with the characters and relate to them - your enthusiasm and engagement with the characters will encourage this.

The characters will 'attend' all the sessions, which helps them come alive for the pupils. This will also build up knowledge of the characters over time and a willingness to engage with their stories and issues.

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Technique 3: Character masks

Each of the child characters has a happy face and a sad face that can be laminated and cut out. These faces can be used to show the changing nature of a child's feelings when they are placed on an A3 body outline during the course of their story (Sessions 2-5).

The faces can also be used as masks for members of staff or pupils to speak in role as a character (Sessions 1-6).

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Technique 4: Use of stories with colour illustrations

Sessions 2-5 each include a central story about abuse using one of the child characters.

The stories are examples and of course cannot show all children, types of families, carers or abusers. However there is enough variety to reflect life experiences and you can always add in other characters to the stories and scenarios, such as a kind aunt, a teasing cousin, a friendly grandpa, a cheerful foster carer, a mean neighbour, and so on.

There are colour illustrations on the slides to accompany the stories and ways of presenting the stories and using them to support pupils' learning are provided.

Technique 5: Use of scenes with line drawings

• Line drawings are used to expand on the topic of each session.

Technique 6: Acting and role play

• It can be helpful if you enjoy using acting to enhance the activities, for example, during Session 3: What's the feeling?

• Character mask activity (Session 4).

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Assessment and evaluation

At the beginning of the programme

- You may consider establishing a baseline of pupils' needs.

As the programme progresses

- You can make the links clear between activities and the learning objectives for pupils.

- You can identify how learning objectives relate to the activities and to real life or the pupils' personal experience.

- You can observe what pupils say and do, and what others (peers, parents and staff) say too.

- The activities are interactive so how the pupils behave in the sessions can indicate what they are learning or understanding.

- The format of the sessions gives the opportunity to recap as the session progresses and check out what pupils are understanding, repeating key messages as necessary.

Post session staff feedback

After each session there is an evaluation form you may wish to use to help you and your staff:

- discuss the objectives for the session.

- consider the learning outcomes and progress for the group and for individuals.

- note issues for consideration or further development.

- note any other observations about individuals, including any information or disclosures that might not need action but that may add to a wider picture of safeguarding for a pupil.

- review the written observations if you have designated a teaching assistant to do this.

- discuss ideas for what to recap in the next session and how to take the programme forward.

At the end of the programme

Some suggested questions for evaluating the programme:

- What were/are the pupils' needs in this area of work?

- What do pupils know/understand now that they didn't know at the beginning of the programme?

- What can pupils do now that they could not do at the beginning of the programme?

- How well did the programme build the learning of the pupils session by session?

- Can you give specific examples of individual pupils' learning?

- How well do you think what they have learned will be remembered/transferred?

- Can you identify specific activities or resources that were useful or that could be used again to reinforce learning now and in the future?

- What have been the overall outcomes for staff (e.g. trying new methods, activities and ways of tackling sensitive topics)?

- How can this programme be shared with the rest of the school and who else needs to know about it (e.g. senior management, other classes, other staff)?

- Is there a way of sharing the messages of this programme with parents/carers and families?

- Has there been any feedback from families?

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Useful resources and organisations

Visit https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/safeguarding-child-protection-schools to find out more about our other services for schools. Image in Action also offer resources for SEND/ASN/ALN schools, available at http://www.imageinaction.org/.

Resources:

Online Safety Hub
Visit our Online Safety Hub for advice and information on a range of different online safety topics including gaming, social media, sharing nudes, parental controls and more.
https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/

You will also find online safety information for families of children with additional needs and disabilities. We have worked with Ambitious about Autism and parents and carers who have children with additional needs and disabilities to create activities to help talk about online safety.
https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/online-safety-families-children-with-send/

https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/online-safety-families-children-with-send/supporting-children-with-send-talking-online/

https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/online-safety-families-children-with-send/supporting-online-wellbeing-for-children-with-send/

Keeping Children Safe Online
Parents, carers and professionals can keep up to date with the latest child safety online news on our Keeping Children Safe Online blog.
https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/online-safety-blog

NSPCC Talk PANTS
https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/support-for-parents/pants-underwear-rule/

'Talking Together… About Growing Up' and other resources for RSE
https://www.fpa.org.uk/

'First Steps to Safety: teaching protective behaviours to young children'
https://www.routledge.com/go/speechmark

BigTalk Education Growing Up Safe Cards
http://www.bigtalkeducation.co.uk/shop/

Picture Yourself
http://bodysense.org.uk/SREResources.shtml

Organisations:

Anti-Bullying Alliance
https://anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk/

PSHE Association
https://pshe-association.org.uk/

Sex Education Forum
https://www.sexeducationforum.org.uk/

Council for Disabled Children
https://councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk/

Mentally Healthy Schools
https://www.mentallyhealthyschools.org.uk/

Find out more about our work at
nspcc.org.uk

EVERY CHILDHOOD IS WORTH FIGHTING FOR