

# Healthy Relationships

**LET'S TALK**  
Helping young people thrive



# Who are Let's Talk?

We support young people to develop **knowledge, skills and confidence** to make **informed decisions** about their **health and wellbeing**

**Free, confidential, and non-judgemental** support and advice including about:

- Relationships
- Sexual Health
- Drugs and alcohol
- Understanding anger
- Health and wellbeing





# Group Agreement

- Safe space for learning – no judgement
- Take part
- Ask questions – but nothing personal
- Listen – don't talk over
- Language
- Confidentiality
- Look after you!

# Learning Objectives

By the end of this lesson, you will be able to:

- Identify what makes a relationship healthy, unhealthy or abusive
- Understand the importance of respecting differences
- Challenge common myths about relationships
- Consider what makes a good friend
- Identify how to support yourself or someone you know



# Trigger Warning

Please note that during this session we will be exploring sensitive topics, and these may be distressing to some members of the class.

If you feel like you need a moment out of the session, please inform a member of staff.

If you recognise unhealthy behaviours you have displayed, remember this is a space for learning not judgement. Learning gives us opportunities to improve and move forward with better choices in how we treat others.





# What is a relationship?

A relationship is how two or more people are connected.

There are many different types of relationships, not just romantic.

Can you think of any?

Friends

Parents

Partners

Classmates

Carers

Doctors

Siblings

Teachers

# **Positive and Negative Behaviours**

ACTIVITY

# Teaching notes

Split learners into pairs or small groups and give them two pieces of paper. Ask them to write 'positive' in the middle/top of one, and 'negative' in the middle/top of the other.

We then want them to discuss with each other to come up with some positive and negative relationship behaviours.

Prompts:

- What makes a good friend?
- What do you look for in a partner?
- What would make you stop being friends with someone or break up a relationship?
- How do you want to be treated? How do you NOT want to be treated?
- How do you want to feel? How do you NOT want to feel?

People will have some personal preferences – things like being funny, good looking, smart, rich! And different people can bring different things, e.g. do you have one friend who is really funny but not great to talk to about serious topics, and another who's a great shoulder to cry on but tells really bad jokes? This is why it's important to have multiple different relationships and not expect one person to be everything.

However, there are some things that ALL positive relationships need to include – debrief with slide.

# Positive relationships should include...

**Respect**

**Communication**

**Kindness**

**Trust**

**Safety**

**Boundaries**

**Equality**

**Consent**

# Consent

In intimate situations, it is important to make sure that you and your partner

- know you **have a choice** to take part or not
- **understand what's happening**
- feel you can **make that choice freely**, and are not pressured or threatened in any way

**What is the age of consent in the UK?**



# Boundaries

Boundaries are the invisible lines that separate our personal space, thoughts, emotions, and values from those of others.

They define what is ok and not ok in our interactions with others.



**I love physical affection like hugging and kissing.**

**I don't want you to go on my phone.**

**I would prefer you didn't speak to other girls.**



**I don't like hugs, and prefer to show affection through words.**

**I'd prefer you didn't 'like' other men's pictures.**

**I won't stop talking to my female friends.**



# Teaching notes

Boundaries – would these two people be good together in a relationship? Why or why not?

Boundaries vs control – boundaries are about your own behaviour, control is about trying to force someone else to change theirs.

# Boundaries

There is a difference between trying to control someone and setting boundaries.

Boundaries are not telling another person what they can and can't do.

**BOUNDARIES**

I'd feel better if you let me know where you are so I know you're safe

I don't feel comfortable around your friend so don't want to be around them

If you keep talking about this topic, I'll need to walk away

I don't feel comfortable with you talking to your ex

You need to share your location with me at all times

You're not allowed to be friends with that person anymore

Shut up and stop talking about that topic

I'm going to check all your messages to make sure you aren't talking to them

**CONTROL**

# Respecting Differences

Disagreements are a healthy part of relationships, however it's important that these are respectful and that no one faces discrimination for who they are.



# Respecting Differences

**Age**

**Disability**

**Sexual  
orientation**

**Gender  
reassignment**

**Race**

**Pregnancy and  
maternity**

**Sex**

**Religion or  
belief**

**Marriage and  
civil partnership**

The Equality Act 2010 provides protections based on nine protected characteristics.

Hate crimes are offences motivated by hostility or prejudice towards someone's race, religion, disability, sexual orientation and transgender identity.

**Unhealthy and  
abusive  
relationships**

# What makes an unhealthy behaviour become abusive?

When they know it hurts your feelings but keep doing it

Can't sustain healthy behaviour changes

Apologises but they don't mean it

Makes you doubt yourself

Has a pattern to their unhealthy behaviours

You feel nervous to say the wrong thing

Wants to make all the decisions

# Teaching notes

Videos – choose which video is most appropriate for your group



A woman with long brown hair, wearing a yellow long-sleeved top and blue jeans, is sitting in a white chair in a living room. She is looking directly at the camera with a serious expression. Her hands are clasped together in her lap. The background shows a modern living room with a white sofa, a black side table with a lamp, and framed pictures on the wall.

**KARI TRENT STAGEBERG**  
Domestic Abuse Survivor

# **What is coercive control?**

Coercive control refers to any behaviour that isolates the person from support, intimidates them and deprives them of their independence.

**Serious Crime Act 2015**

# Teaching notes

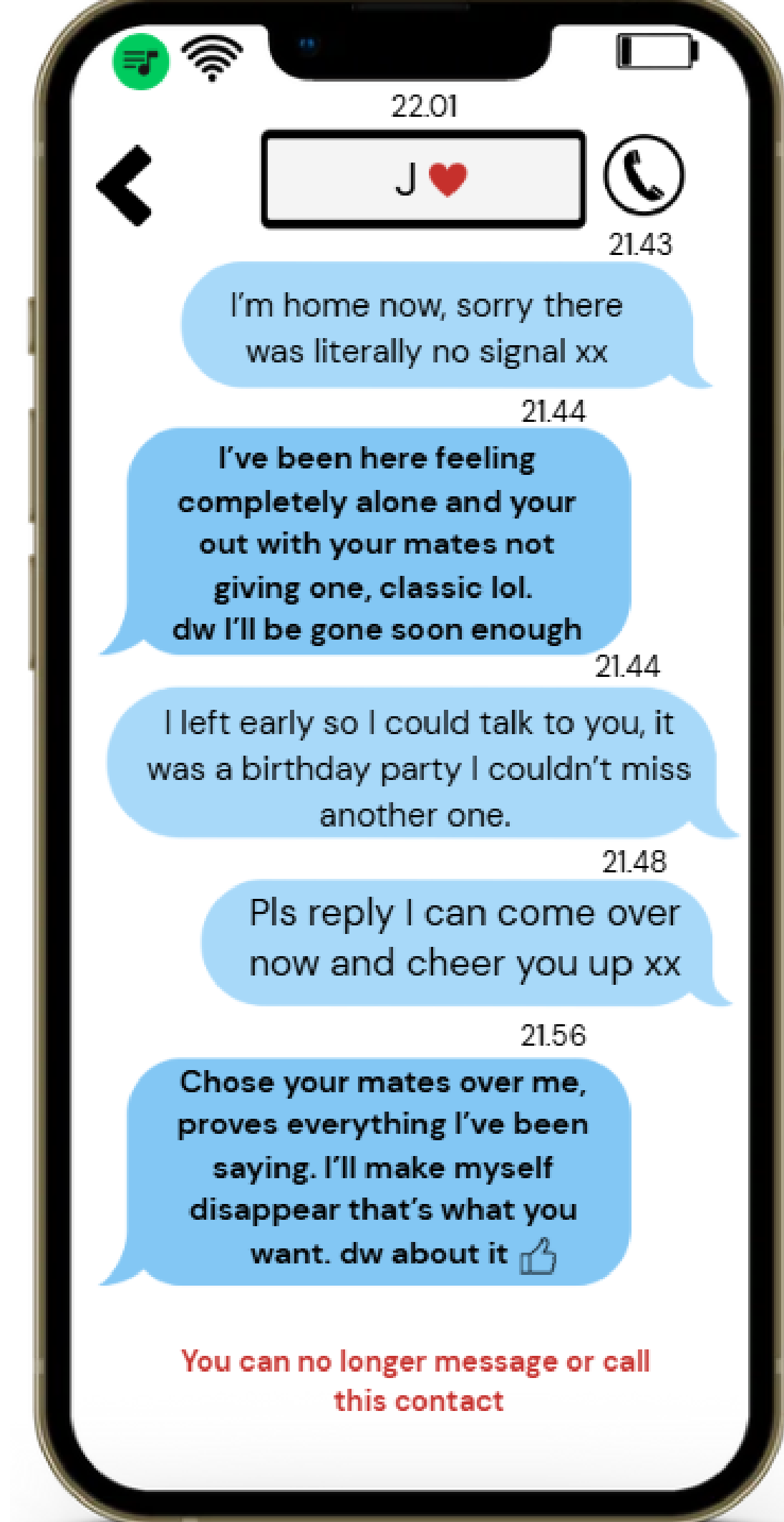
Text message scenarios:

J – coercion by implying that they will harm themselves because the other person did not act how they wanted them to. Even though they are not threatening another person with harm, threatening suicide or harming themselves is a form of emotional abuse. The suggestion that the person is wrong for going out or choosing their friends first is also a form of controlling behaviour which attempts to isolate the individual. 'I couldn't miss another one' also implies that this is a pattern where they have missed seeing their friends to please 'J' in the past.

Does this relationship seem healthy?

Coercion is defined by isolation, intimidation and a deprivation of independence.

Does this relationship have any aspects of this?



# Teaching notes

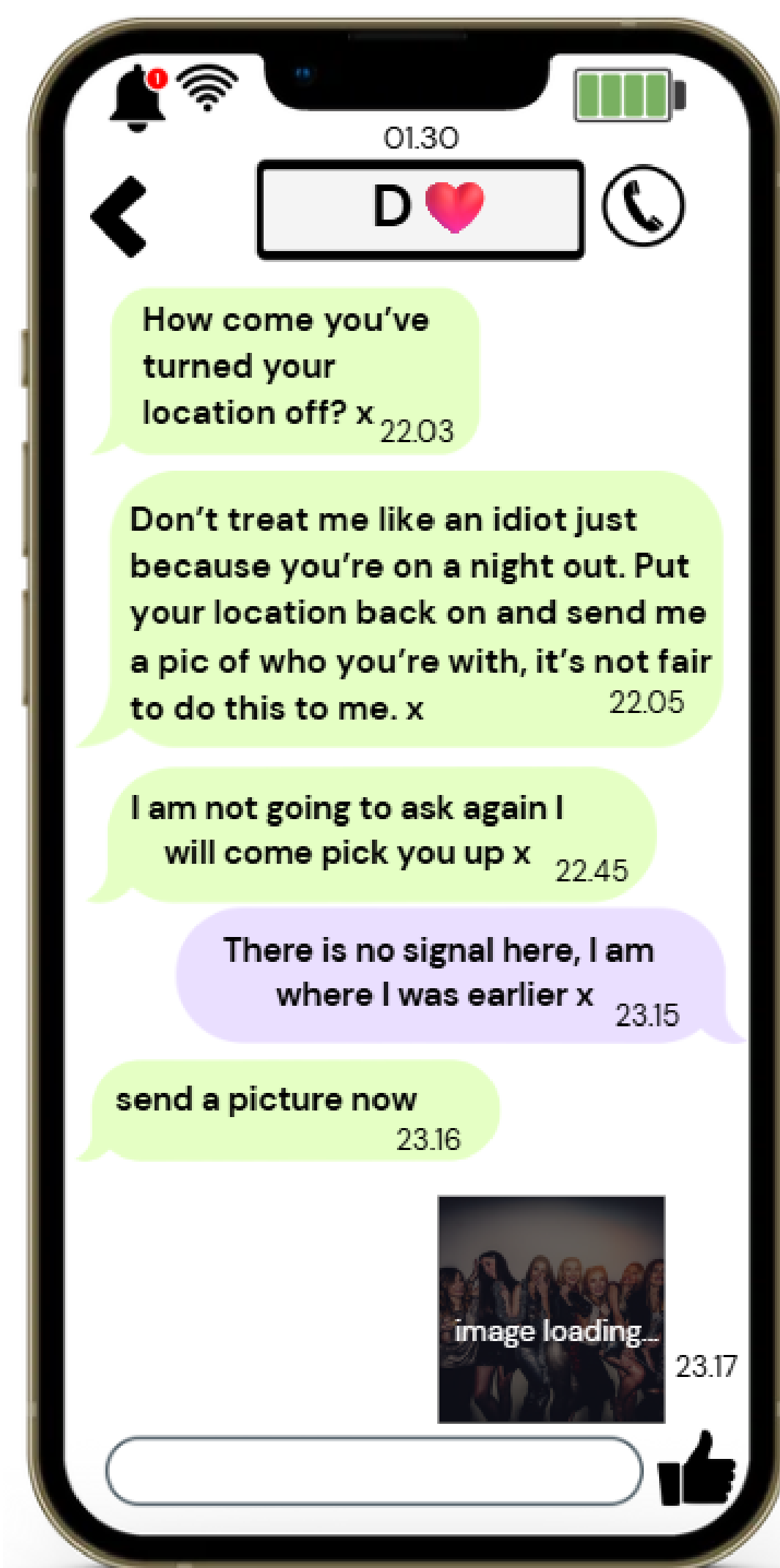
Text message scenarios:

D – pressuring someone to share their location is a form of coercive control with a point to strip the person of their independence, monitor their movements and isolate them. They also threaten 'I am not going to ask again I will come pick you up' - implying that they have control of what the person does and doesn't do, and suggesting something bad will happen if they don't do as they say.

Does this relationship seem healthy?

Coercion is defined by isolation, intimidation and a deprivation of independence.

Does this relationship have any aspects of this?



# Teaching notes

Text message scenarios:

Alex – this one is more subtle so can be hard to spot. The initial conversation seems friendly, however there is an underlying message that the person should take a photo down that they've posted because it's 'embarrassing'. The implication that everyone is talking about them can also feel isolating. Is this a partner? If so, it could be a sign that Alex doesn't trust them and wants them to act a certain way to not get 'attention' from other people.

Does this relationship seem healthy?

Coercion is defined by isolation, intimidation and a deprivation of independence.

Does this relationship have any aspects of this?



# Teaching notes

Text message scenarios:

Charlie - there are signs of harassment here – multiple messages without a response, turning up at their location to pick them up without consent, being told to go and not listening, messaging them and turning up after they have been told they're not meant to speak anymore. There is definite intimidation involved here as the person may feel unsafe in the location where they are and the need to hide to avoid this person which could prevent them from going places they would usually go to.

Does this relationship seem healthy?

Coercion is defined by isolation, intimidation and a deprivation of independence.

Does this relationship have any aspects of this?



# What coercive control might look like

Threatening to expose sensitive information

Being made to share location or show who they are with

Demanding obedience from and power over the victim

Threatening suicide or harm (for example 'you won't ever need to worry about me again' or 'I don't know what I'm capable of if you get with someone else').

Making the victim feel they owe sex to someone

Displaying extreme jealousy

Convinced into doing something illegal (e.g shoplifting) and then using this information to blackmail

**Healthy vs  
Unhealthy vs  
Abusive**

# Teaching notes

## **RESOURCE: Download the Healthy vs Unhealthy vs Abusive cards activity**

Cut out the cards and split young people into small groups. Give each group a set of cards and ask them to sort them into Healthy/Unhealthy/Abusive – if they are unsure of any ask them to leave them to one side.

Start by asking if anyone wants to share any they weren't sure of and have a discussion around these and why they might be more difficult to place.

Go through the cards (or pick out a few) and ask the group where they put it and why, debriefing and challenging where appropriate.

# **Power Imbalances**

# Age gaps

Why would a young person date someone older?

Why do people want to date younger than themselves?



# Teaching notes

**Age gaps – why might for example, a 15 year old want to date a 20 year old and vice versa?**

A young person might want to date someone older because it seems cool; because they think the other person is more mature; because they have more money or resources; they might make them feel they are more mature and 'grown up' themselves; for protection.

An older person might want to date someone younger usually because they can have power over the young person who will be more vulnerable and impressionable. Why don't they want to date someone their own age?

What is an acceptable age gap? What about if there is a pattern? E.g. it's legal for a 19 year old to date a 16 year old, and perhaps they have genuinely fallen for each other and are happy. However, does it make a difference if the 19 year old only ever dates people who are years younger than them? Why would they do that?

# **Myth vs Fact**

# Teaching notes

**Two boys hugging each other must be gay - MYTH** (it's normal for boys to show physical affection to each other who are friends in the same way as girls can. As humans, we need physical contact to thrive and it can negatively impact our mental health to avoid this when we need it)

**Changing is normal in relationships - FACT** (changing is healthy, it's how we grow! Our relationships should encourage and celebrate these changes. Sometimes this means growing apart from people and sometimes it means growing alongside them. Both are ok)

**There is one right way to communicate with each other – MYTH** (people communicate in different ways – communication is important but you should talk about how you prefer to do this)

**It's normal to have disagreements - FACT** (disagreements are healthy but should be done respectfully – arguing all the time is not)

# Teaching notes

**Your partner should complete you – MYTH** (you are your own person and a partner should complement you)

**A relationship is about putting their needs above your own – MYTH** (relationships involve balance and compromising sometimes. Your boundaries are important and it should be give and take)

**Jealousy isn't an excuse for controlling behaviour – FACT** (jealousy is a normal emotion to feel sometimes, but it's up to us to deal with that emotion without blaming someone else for it or using it as an excuse to control them)

**Relationships should last forever – MYTH** (there are lots of reasons why relationships end. Even if it was a positive relationship that ended that you might be sad about, it can be a positive memory and have helped you to grow as people)

**A healthy relationship includes regular sex - MYTH** (it can do, but it shouldn't be expected as the default)

# **Positive Relationships**

# Friendships

We often focus on romantic relationships, but our friends are usually the ones who stand by us through all our ups and downs.

They give us advice, support, and encouragement, and are often the people we turn to when we are struggling.



# HOW TO BE A BETTER FRIEND

(ACCORDING  
TO SCIENCE)



# **A letter to a friend**

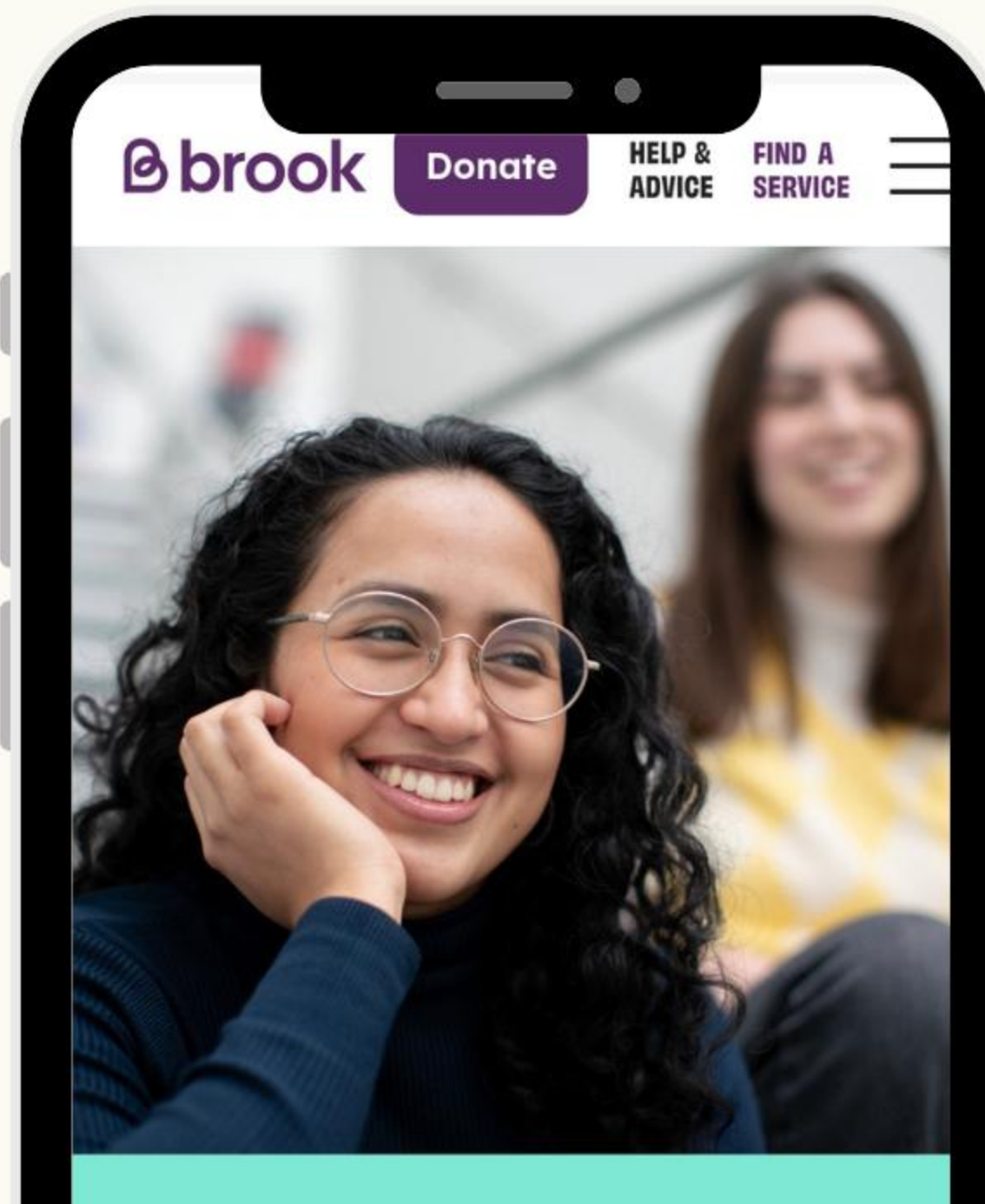
Write a letter to someone you love telling them why they're great

# Safe places to learn about sex & relationships

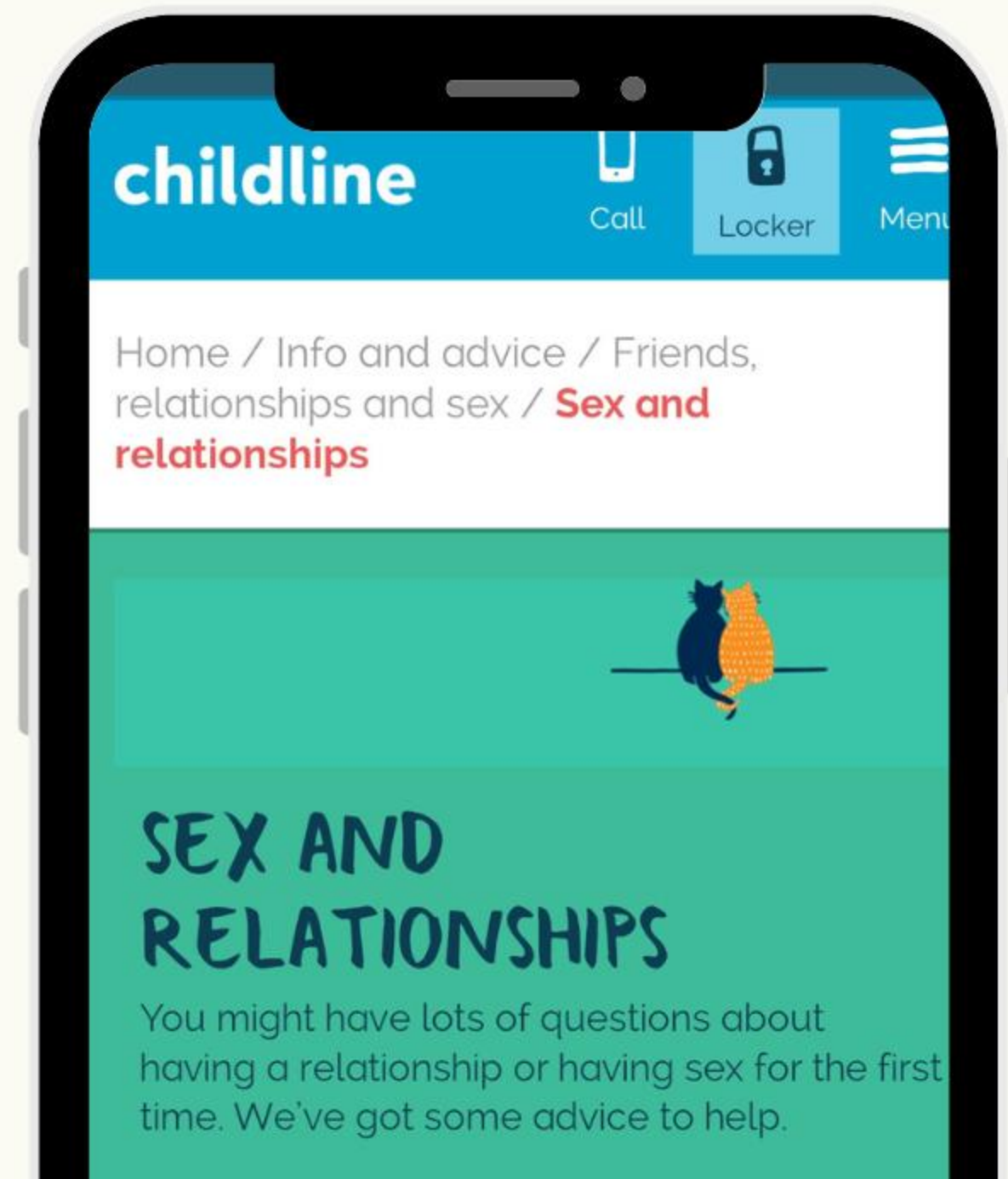
## Let's Talk



## Brook



## Childline



# Where to get support



**Branch** is an online mental wellbeing hub for children and young people in Wirral, from 0 all the way to 18 (and up to 25 with additional needs).



**Health services in schools** have youth workers who can offer 121 support around any concerns or support you may need. Ask your teacher to learn how to chat to them.

# ourPlace

**ourPlace** is a free, confidential and non-judgemental service for young people aged 19 and under living in Wirral.

Our friendly team provide advice, support and treatment in a discreet and young person friendly clinic area.

Services and support:

- Contraception
- Emergency contraception
- Condoms
- STI testing
- Psychosexual support
- LGBTQ+ support





## Visiting ourPlace

**Monday to Thursday - 3.00pm to 7.00pm**

**Friday - 3.00pm to 6.00pm**

**Saturday - 1.30pm to 3.30pm**

For appointments, please call **0300 123 5474**

Location:

ourPlace, 1st floor, St Catherine's Health Centre, Derby Road, Birkenhead CH42 0LQ