

# Online sexual harassment

## Assembly Guidance

Assembly delivery notes for educators

A Campaign  
Toolkit from



Step Up,  
Speak Up!



PROJECT  
**deSHAME**

Digital Exploitation and Sexual Harassment Among Minors in Europe  
Understanding, Preventing, Responding



Co-financed by  
the European Union

# Online Sexual Harassment Assembly Guidance

🕒 30 – 45 minutes

This assembly is part of the 'Step Up, Speak Up!' Campaign Toolkit; a PSHE and RSE resource designed for young people aged 13 – 17 years old. The assembly is one of a number of activities created to support young people to discuss, explore and challenge online sexual harassment and to look at its impact.

For further information on the Step Up, Speak Up! resources and the other activities in the toolkit, please see the [Teaching Toolkit](#).

## Aim of the Assembly

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This assembly is designed as an overview for the topic of peer-to-peer online sexual harassment and to inform young people how to report it.

It can be used either:

- as an introduction
- as a recap session after other activities have been delivered
- as a review of the topic a little while after initial activities are delivered

It seeks to:

- raise awareness amongst students aged 13 – 17 years old of what constitutes online sexual harassment
- signpost to the available routes to report incidences of online sexual harassment
- highlight some of the perceived barriers that have been found to prevent victims and bystanders from reporting online sexual harassment
- remove these barriers and increase confidence in reporting incidences of online sexual harassment

To make most effective use of this assembly, it is recommended to be used in conjunction with other activities to explore this topic further as part of an embedded, whole school approach.

## Delivering the Assembly

The assembly has been designed to be delivered in a school or educational setting, by a member of staff. It is expected that this staff member will be the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or another member of staff with responsibility and understanding of child protection or safeguarding procedures.

### Points to Consider

The following points are listed for the consideration of the presenter prior to holding the assembly. For further guidance on how to deliver this assembly, see **p.5** in the [Teaching Guide](#).

#### Have you spoken with your school or setting's DSL?

If you are not the DSL for your school or setting, ensure you have discussed the assembly content with them and any questions you might have which are specific to how online sexual harassment is dealt with in your school/setting. It is important to be clear not only on the procedures for reporting and responding to online sexual harassment, but also on the support which is available for victims and the role any external agencies may play in this, such as counsellors, social workers or the police.

#### Are you confident in delivering the presentation content?

Before running the assembly, familiarise yourself with the presentation slides and accompanying notes. Ensure you are confident with delivering the content and answering any follow-up questions from students. Alongside this guidance document, other documents which may be of use are: **the Step Up, Speak Up! [Teaching Guide](#), the Step Up, Speak Up! [Guidance for Schools](#) and the [Project deSHAME Research Report](#).**

#### Are you prepared for disclosures?

There is a possibility the content in this assembly will lead to some students making disclosures about online sexual harassment (or other concerns) to you. In addition to following your school or settings' child protection procedure, you can find further support on handling disclosures on p.8 in the [Teaching Guide](#) and p.23 in the 'Responding' section of the [Guidance for Schools](#) document.

#### Are you aware of the current school context?

It is vital to be aware of any issues which may impact the delivery of the assembly and the student's current school context. Are the Project deSHAME materials being delivered as part of a general movement to address online sexual harassment or is your school using the materials to respond to a specific incident? If the latter, which students were involved and how are they likely to be affected by the material covered in the assembly? Is there a risk of re-victimisation if other members of the school community associate the assembly with individual students? See the [Teaching Guide p.5](#) for more information on how to best deliver the content in a way sensitive to the needs of your students.

#### Who should the assembly be delivered to and how?

As a member of school staff, you know your students best and will know the best way to engage them with the Project deSHAME materials. Having looked over the assembly content, consider how best to use it within your setting. Different delivery options include:

- Whole year groups in one session
- Smaller groups in separate sessions
- Single sex groups
- Seminar or workshop style with a high level of interactivity
- Formal presentation style where opportunities for reflection are taken privately and without discussion

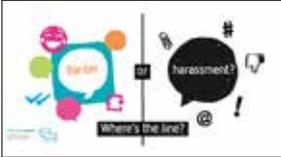


**Note:** When delivering the assembly content, carefully consider the language you use to support victims and avoid displaying any personal judgement which may disengage or alienate students.

## Slide-by-Slide Guidance

Please note, abbreviated guidance for each slide is also included in the PowerPoint presentation under the 'Notes' section.

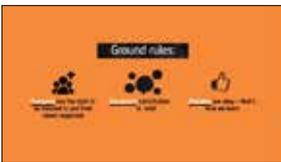
Key opportunities for staff to adapt the assembly content are highlighted below.



### Slide 1

## Online Sexual Harassment Assembly – Title Slide

Placeholder slide whilst students enter the room.



### Slide 2

## Ground rules

Open the assembly by setting your expectations for behaviour and sharing some ground rules.

You may wish to deliver the Ground Rules lesson from the [Lesson Plans](#) before delivering this assembly, or any further activities on this issue.



### Slide 3

## Talking about life online

Start the session off by talking about the positives of being online. Questions you could ask students to discuss or think about include:

- What do you like to do online?
- What apps and services do you use?
- What are your favourite things about being online?
- Are there any negative aspects of being online?

It may be useful to know which apps and online services are used most commonly by your students. You could get a show of hands, or find out more by running a school-wide survey.

Explain to students that as a school you want to support your students with all the positive aspects of being online, but you also know that there can be negative aspects to life online as well, and some of these may be issues like bullying and harassment. Confirm that as a school you're committed to tackling bullying and harassment in all its forms including when it takes place online. Explain that the session is going to focus on a particular form of online harassment.



### Slide 4

## What is online sexual harassment?

Show the slide and give students some time to read it through. You could choose to read aloud some of the quotes.

Explain that these are real life examples which were described during research into online sexual harassment – the topic for today's session.



## Slide 5

### Definition Slide 1

Read aloud the information shown on the screen. This slide is intended to give a clear, basic definition of online sexual harassment.

Online sexual harassment can be defined as **unwanted sexual behaviour** on any digital platform. It can happen to anyone online, but this assembly (and the whole Step Up, Speak Up! toolkit) specifically focuses on **peer-to-peer** online sexual harassment.

Online sexual harassment can include a wide range of behaviours that use digital content (images, videos, posts, messages, pages) on a variety of different online platforms (private or public).



## Slide 6

### Definition Slide 2

Read aloud the first question. Explain that there is no typical victim of online sexual harassment. It can impact both boys and girls, although research shows girls are more likely to face harsher consequences if they are targeted.

Next, explain that online sexual harassment often overlaps with other discrimination and hate crimes, online and offline. It often overlaps with harassment related to a person's actual or perceived gender, sexual orientation, race, religion, special educational needs or disability.

Read aloud the second question. Explain that online sexual harassment by definition takes place online, but that it's important to remember that it impacts the offline world too. It's often playing out in front of a school or local community audience.

As a member of staff, you know your students best and are ideally placed to gauge how they will respond to these statements on gender and vulnerability. Use your knowledge of your students to determine how best to deliver this slide – you could state the facts detailed on the presentation then move on, or use this as an opportunity for reflection – perhaps inviting students to think about whether they believe gender plays a role in online sexual harassment, or if this is something they have witnessed or experienced for themselves. You could encourage students to reflect on how the wider expectations from society and culture impact on male and female roles online, and how this can impact on the behaviour involved with online sexual harassment.



**Note:** This slide describes the gendered context of online sexual harassment. However, it is important that the role played by gender in online sexual harassment is not used to excuse stereotyping of victims (E.g. "All victims are girls. No boys are victims.") It is important to recognise that **anyone can be a victim of online sexual harassment** but that within that there may be more negative consequences for female victims.



## Slide 7

### What does the law say?

Explain that some incidents of online sexual harassment can break the law. There are several laws which can apply, including those on this slide.

Whilst it is important for students to know about the legal context, it is equally important for them to understand that the police take a common-sense approach to all cases involving young people and are not seeking to criminalise young people unnecessarily.

Some young people may think that if a young person breaks the law, or the police need to visit the school, they will make arrests or even put people in jail. These consequences are not routine or commonplace police responses. Any steps the police take next will be in proportion to the severity of the incident – the context is always key.

Whilst they have a duty to investigate any crime that is reported to them, the police do so in order to ensure young people are being protected and to stop any further risk of harm.

They would need to speak to all persons involved in order to make the most appropriate decision on what to do next. It is crucial to explain that if the police need to be involved, the school will support all students through that process.

Emphasise that even though the law gives us some boundaries, any behaviour which is unwanted is unacceptable, regardless of whether it breaks the law or not.



**Note:** Please see the [Teaching Guide p.14](#) for more details about the laws that can apply to online sexual harassment.



## Slide 8

### Scenario 1

This is one of two scenario based activities throughout the assembly. Each one is based on real incidences of online sexual harassment, and offers four options.

Ask students to imagine themselves as Rani and decide how they might respond.

#### Most helpful response: D

Each scenario can be adapted and run in the way you feel will be most helpful for your students, for example:

- You could choose to read the scenario aloud, then give students an opportunity to discuss their response with their peers.
- You could have them discuss the scenario in small groups, or lead a whole group discussion.
- For some settings, it may feel most appropriate to read the scenario and options aloud, then provide students the opportunity to vote but with limited or no discussion.
- You may choose to skip the vote and ask students to reflect silently on their response.

You may wish to change the method of delivery as you move through the slides or revisit the assembly later, for example, you may ask students to start with silent reflection, but use the pair discussion or whole group discussion once they have 'warmed' to the messages of the assembly.



**Note:** Students may come to the assembly with their own knowledge and preconceived ideas about online sexual harassment. It's important that they feel neither judged nor dismissed for these ideas, and that any vote or discussion is undertaken sensitively.



## Slide 9

### Response to Scenario 1

Feedback the response to the scenario, with input from students where appropriate.

Consider asking students how they think being a victim of online sexual harassment might make someone feel. Take responses if appropriate. Use the students' responses to lead in to the next slide.



## Slide 10

### How can online sexual harassment make people feel?

Explain that these are some of the responses that research found young people could feel as a result of online sexual harassment. Explain that not every victim always feels the same way – they may feel some, or all, or none of these emotions. There is no right or wrong way to feel as a result of online sexual harassment – and the important thing is what other people (school and students) can do to support any of their peers who may be going through this.



## Slide 11

### What can you do about it? – Advice for students

Explain to students that as a school, you will take action against online sexual harassment and that next in the assembly you're going to talk about what school can do. Remind students that school alone cannot fix this problem, and that everyone in the community needs to work together to tackle online sexual harassment effectively. Talk through the list of supportive actions students can do together.

The last point suggests reporting as an option. Use this point and the attached question – “What happens when you report in school?” – to lead on discussion to the next two slides about how your school/setting handles reports of online sexual harassment.



## Slide 12

### Reporting Procedures

Explain that if students make a report of online sexual harassment there are some things your school will always try to not do. Read through the points on the slide and talk around them where necessary. You may find it useful to clarify the specific wording used, for example:

- We may ask to view your social media accounts to support our investigation into the incident, but as a victim we would never **demand** you give us full access to an account.
- A teacher may need to share your report with another member of staff who is responsible for dealing with online sexual harassment, but we will never gossip about what's happened with people who don't **need to know**.



**Note:** These are examples of best practice when dealing with incidences of online sexual harassment, however on some occasions they may conflict with your setting's policies. Look over the points and remove any that you feel are not applicable for your setting. It's important not to make promises to students which you can't keep and to explain any caveats in advance.



## Slide 13

### Reality of Reporting Procedures

Explain that as staff members you have strict rules and guidelines on how to respond when things are reported to you. Tell the students that on the next slide they'll get to hear what those rules say and how school will deal with reports that are made to them.

Reassure them again that as staff members you want to help and support them and then read the points on the slide, expanding where necessary. For example, you may want to clarify that although you will speak with them before informing anyone else, there are some cases where you have a legal responsibility to involve the police or other external agencies.



## Slide 14

### School Policy and Reporting Procedures

This slide has been left blank to be adapted to suit your school's policies and procedures, and is intended to inform students of what these are and what they mean in practicality.

It is important that as a school you are confident and secure in your wording and application of these policies. For more guidance on ensuring your policies have adequate coverage of online sexual harassment please see **p.18 in the 'Preventing' section of the [Guidance for Schools](#) document.**

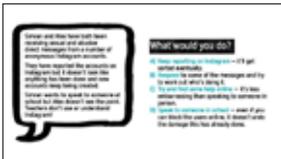
This is your opportunity to inform students of exactly what your school's policies and reporting procedures say and mean. It may be helpful to have a hard copy of the relevant policies on hand – being as transparent as possible here will help students have confidence in the systems in place.

Some of the documents you may want to use include:

- Bullying Policy or School Code of Conduct
- Safeguarding Policy and Procedures
- Behaviour and Sanctions Policy



**Note:** It's important to remember that some of the language familiar to staff (eg. 'safeguarding') may not be understood by students. Explain the policies in appropriate language and clarify any specific terms students may not be familiar with.



## Slide 15

### Scenario 2

This is the second of two scenario based activities throughout the assembly. See Guidance for Slide 8 for further information. Ask students to imagine themselves as either Simran or Alex and decide how they might respond.

**Most helpful response: D**



## Slide 16

### Response to Scenario 2

Talk through the response to the scenario, with input from students where appropriate.

Explain to students that you will signpost them to helplines where they can get support and advice at the end of the session.

Explain to students that before moving to the next slide, you want to emphasise the following point:

“Even if you successfully block someone online, it doesn’t always block the emotions you might be feeling.”

You might want to ask students what they think this means, or how they think you can deal with the emotional response to an incident of online sexual harassment.



## Slide 17

### Reasons to Report

Link back to the point you have just made about emotions – explain that it can be difficult to just ‘block’ emotions but that the best way to manage and cope with them is to share how you’re feeling with someone else. Read aloud the message shown on the slide and then observe that Alex might be wondering how reporting can help sort out what has happened.

Talk through the following list of reasons, discussing further if necessary.

In particular it may be useful to talk specifically about what support services your school or setting has access to, e.g. counselling services, school nurse, Children and adolescent mental health service (CAMHS), Police community support officers (PCSOs), etc.

- Sharing the problem will make you **feel better**
- We will listen to you and be a **sympathetic ear**
- To stop the situation getting worse
- Together we can **take action** on the situation
- We have access to **support** services who can help
- This is your chance to **take back** control
- **It’s the first step to moving forward**



**Note:** Familiarise yourself with any support services you have access to. Ensure you can answer any further questions regarding these services or know where to get more information if needed. If you are concerned that your school does not have access to support services raise this with your DSL or Head Teacher.



## Slide 18

### Ways to Report

This slide is designed to give students the practical tools for making a report. Explain to students that however they feel most comfortable making a report is okay – they can write it down, report with a friend alongside them or ask to have a discussion in private. Clarify that they can report to any member of staff they feel comfortable with and that the issue should be dealt with in the same way.

This slide can also be adapted to match the procedures you have in place. For example, if you have an email address students can contact to report online sexual harassment then include that here or if as a school you have decided on a key phrase students can use to inform staff that there is an issue, you may want to remind students of that here.



## Slide 19

### Reminder of School Procedure

Explain to students that you're nearing the end of the session and that you hope they're feeling more confident about how and why they should report online sexual harassment. Remind them that as a school you're committed to taking online sexual harassment seriously and to responding to any report that is made.

Use this opportunity to remind them of any key points in your reporting procedures and to identify your school or setting's Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL). Explain that the DSL has authority for dealing with reports of online sexual harassment, so other staff members may need to share what they've been told with them. You could also use this opportunity to explain where the DSL can be found – for example, where their office is or what times they are available to speak with students.



## Slide 20

### Call to Action

Finish the session with a call to action. Read aloud the slide and add further school-specific detail where needed. If using other Step Up, Speak Up! materials, make the link between this assembly and the other activities in the toolkit the students will be, or have already been doing.

Explain to students that if they need to talk about anything that's been raised in the session they can contact either of the helplines listed on the next screen or can speak to any member of staff.

There may be students in the audience who are worried about an online incident they think could be online sexual harassment. Conclude the session by giving all students information on who they can go to for help, e.g;

"If you are sat out there right now, worrying about something that has happened online, please come and speak to [insert staff member name] – they will be available at [insert timings and location]"



## Slide 21

### Summary

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Draw attention to the slogan: Step up, speak up and put an end to online sexual harassment.

At the end of the session, distribute the Student Debriefing Sheet to ensure students know where to go for further help and support (**see p.13 in the [Teaching Guide](#)**).

There is a possibility the content in this assembly will lead to some students making disclosures about online sexual harassment (or other concerns) to you. In addition to following your school or setting's child protection procedure, you can find further support on handling disclosures on **p.8 in the [Teaching Guide](#) and p.23 in the 'Responding' section of the [Guidance for Schools](#) document.**



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