



CHANGING RELATIONS
Creative methods. Challenging thinking.



Weaving Stories

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Creative methods. Challenging thinking.

"Transforming relationships through creative engagement"

Changing Relations was founded by Lisa Charlotte Davis in 2013, with the aim of contributing towards genuine, lived gender equality, supporting people to maintain healthy relationships and live fulfilled lives.

Since then, we have established ourselves as an experienced and trusted organisation, whose work creates a lasting impact. We use the arts and creative methods to transform harmful social norms around gender stereotypes and relationship behaviours. As a social enterprise, Changing Relations is not about making a profit - it's about making a difference.

Why Changing Relations uses art and creativity:

- Helps those affected by an issue to find their voice and provides a platform for expression
- Generates awareness and empathy
- Provides a safer space to explore thorny issues
- Creates opportunities for crucial light bulb moments

This report discusses peer sexual abuse. If you are affected by what you read here, there are a number of places that you can access support:

Emergency: If you or someone you know is in **immediate danger**, call the **police - 999**

Help from people you know: If you are worried about what you, or someone in your care, is experiencing, you can **speak to the Designated Safeguarding Lead** within your organisation, or at the young person's school or youth group.

Childline: support for children and young people www.childline.org.uk

Rape Crisis: support for survivors of sexual violence www.rapecrisis.org.uk

Galop: support for LGBT+ people who have experienced abuse and violence www.galop.org.uk

Suzy Lamplugh: stalking support www.suzylamplugh.org

Victim Support: provide support to victims of crime and traumatic incidents (including specialist services for young people) www.victimsupport.org.uk

Stop it now: provide support for people worried about their own behaviour www.stopitnow.org.uk

If you would be interested to learn more about us and what we do, take a look at our website or drop us an email.

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What is Weaving Stories of Peer Sexual Abuse?

The Weaving Stories of Peer Sexual Abuse project explores young people's experience of peer sexual abuse and the cultures that enable it. It resulted in a co-produced animation and learning programme exploring key issues and experiences identified by the young people who participated.

Why tackle the theme of peer sexual abuse?

Changing Relations' starting point was conversations with RSACC¹ (part of the Rape Crisis² network) CEO, Isabel Owens, who shared concerns from young clients that school staff don't know what to say or how to react when young people disclose peer sexual abuse or how to support them effectively over the longer term. She also flagged that whilst most young people want to be at school and learning, some feel unable to due to the barriers that they experience in school.

The regional picture described by Isabel Owens is mirrored nationally in Ofsted's 2021 *Rapid Review of Sexual Abuse in Schools and Colleges*³ which followed the emergence of Everyone's Invited⁴, the House of Commons Women and Equalities Committee 2023 *Attitudes Towards Women and Girls in Educational Settings* report⁵ and evidence from Changing Relations' partners within Durham University's Centre for Research into Violence and Abuse (CRiVA)⁶

"I am currently supporting a client who was raped by 2 of her classmates on a college trip away. The college made my client stay for the duration of the trip and did not inform her parents or the police. My client informed her dad when she returned home who then reported to the police on her behalf. The college did not have a risk assessment in place for the trip, despite her having additional needs, and my client was made to sit on her own at lunchtimes so that she did not bump into the perpetrators. My client has now left that college and started this academic year elsewhere."

- RSACC Counsellor

Key points which emerged from Ofsted's report:

- Ofsted considered "listening to pupil voice" a priority
- There is a hugely gendered understanding of the frequency of sexual abuse in schools, with boys thinking it is much less likely to occur (particularly contact forms) than girls. (See Figure 1)
- Ofsted recommended that schools "assume that sexual harassment and online sexual abuse are happening in their setting, even when there are no specific reports"
- Children and young people are reticent to report peer sexual abuse because of: the "risk of being ostracised by peers"; the impact of "getting peers into trouble"; thinking they will not be believed and/or will be blamed; concerns about how, once they report, the "process will be out of their control"
- Professionals are relying on children and young people "telling someone about abuse instead of recognising other indicators"
- "School and college leaders are increasingly having to make difficult decisions that the guidance does not equip them to make" especially when criminal investigations do not lead to prosecution or conviction

¹ <https://www.rsacc-thecentre.org.uk/>

² <https://rapecrisis.org.uk/>

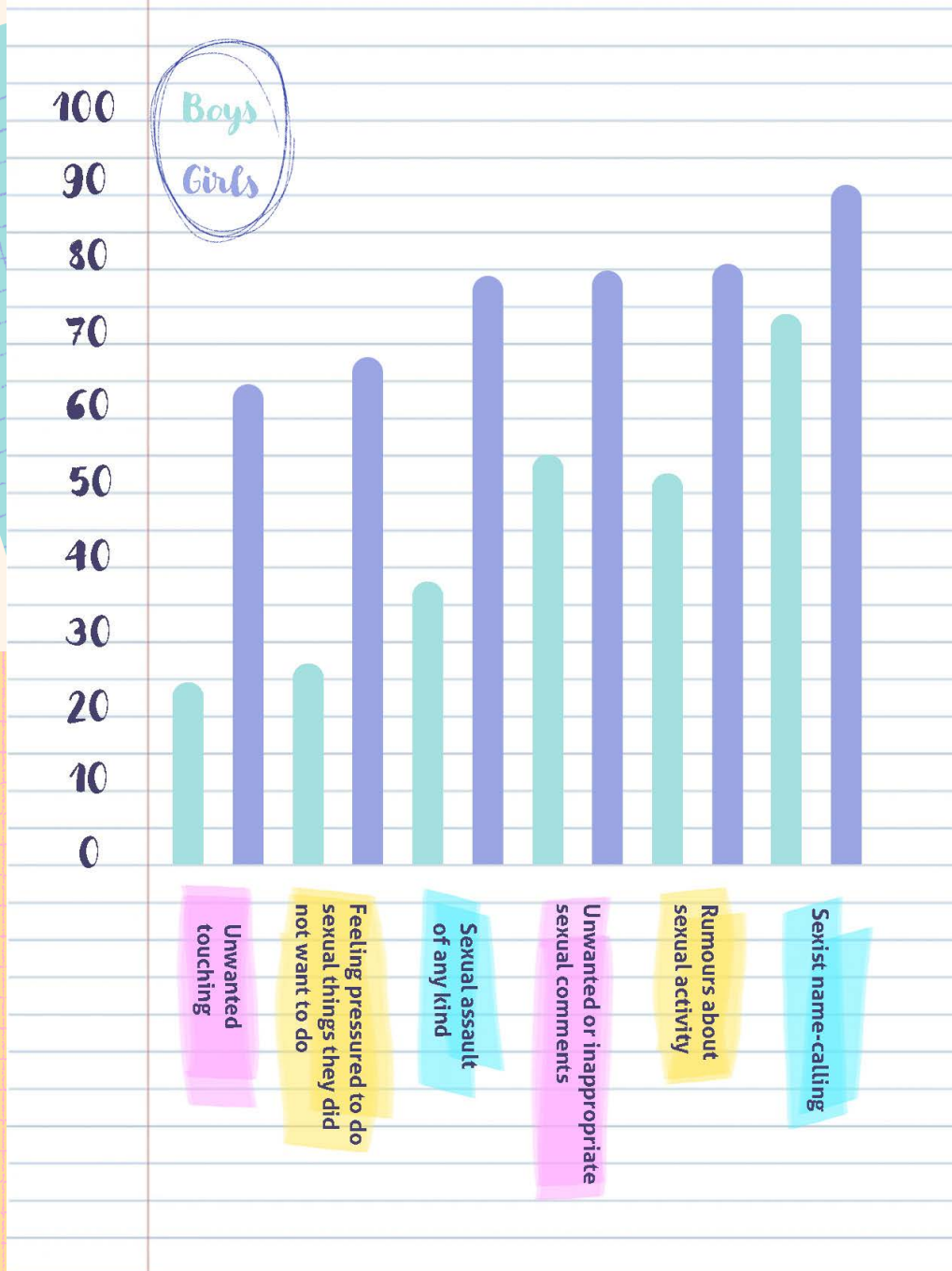
³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/review-of-sexual-abuse-in-schools-and-colleges/review-of-sexual-abuse-in-schools-and-colleges>

⁴ <https://www.everyonesinvited.uk/>

⁵ <https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/42163/documents/209548/default/>

⁶ <https://www.durham.ac.uk/research/institutes-and-centres/research-violence-abuse/>

Figure 1. These things happen 'a lot' or 'sometimes' between people my age (%)³



"Some teachers and leaders underestimated the scale of the problem. They either did not identify sexual harassment and sexualised language as problematic or they were unaware they were happening"⁷



"In the focus groups, many children and young people talked about teachers not 'knowing the reality' of their lives... they reported much higher incidences of sexual harassment, online sexual abuse and bullying than teachers tended to be aware of"⁷

⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/review-of-sexual-abuse-in-schools-and-colleges/review-of-sexual-abuse-in-schools-and-colleges>

Key points from the House of Commons Women & Equalities Committee 2023 report:

- Men and boys were overwhelmingly the main perpetrators of sexual harassment and violence
- Sexual harassment in schools is commonplace and often goes unchallenged
- The culture surrounding sexual harassment and sexual violence has a detrimental effect on girls' and young women's confidence, invalidates their experiences and inhibits disclosure (including leading to girls to make excuses for what happened to them instead of holding boys and young men to account)
- There is a gendered understanding of sexual harassment with boys and young men not recognising that their behaviour is unacceptable and is harmful to girls and young women



"Boys and young men often did not understand sexual harassment in the same way as girls and young women. Most were unaware of how their behaviour affected women and girls and did not see that they, or their peers, had done anything wrong..... most were unable to define sexual harassment and could not see why low-level behaviour, such as cat-calling was unacceptable."⁸

Key evidence from CRiVA:

- There is a key relationship between things happening in school and online when children are at home and from their perspective, there is no separation
- More extreme incidences are more likely in school cultures where low level things are not being grappled, for instance banter along the lines of 'who's next'⁹
- Labelling children and young people who display harmful sexual behaviour inappropriately like 'adolescent perpetrator' can overlook that they have needs such as previous experiences of trauma¹⁰

Hypothesis and Aims

The hypothesis for the Weaving Stories of Peer Sexual Abuse project is that:

By using creatively co-produced artwork based on lived experience we can increase engagement in the subject and engender change in the culture and behaviour surrounding peer sexual abuse.

The project aims are:

- For co-production participants to feel empowered and have an increased sense of agency, increased resilience and increased self-worth
- To enable participants to better identify "low level" harmful sexual behaviour and victim shaming "banter", understand the impact of these attitudes and behaviours and their link to more extreme behaviour in order to change their own behaviour and attitudes and be more able to challenge those behaviours and attitudes in their peers
- To enable teachers to understand how to create a more survivor supportive environment in school and have increased confidence to make the necessary changes to create it

⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/review-of-sexual-abuse-in-schools-and-colleges/review-of-sexual-abuse-in-schools-and-colleges>

⁹ Lloyd, J. and Bradbury, V. (2023) 'Zero tolerance to sexual harm in schools – from broken rules to broken systems', Journal of Sexual Aggression, 29(2), pp. 226–242. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13552600.2022.2057605>.

¹⁰McKibbin, G., Kuruppu, J., Hackett, S., Lynch, O., Hamilton, B. and Dixon, S., 2025. The child behind the victim: Survivor experiences of children's harmful sexual behavior. Child Abuse & Neglect, 163, p.107277.

Who shaped the animation and education programme?

22 young people in years 9 and 10 participated in the project, recruited from within Park View School, Chester-le-Street, Co. Durham and via RSACC. All young people were self-selecting. Across the participant group there were:

- Male and female presenting and non-binary identifying young people
- Young people within the school setting who identified themselves as “the naughty ones” and others who identified as “the quiet ones”
- Young people of different ethnicities
- Young people from different socio-economic backgrounds

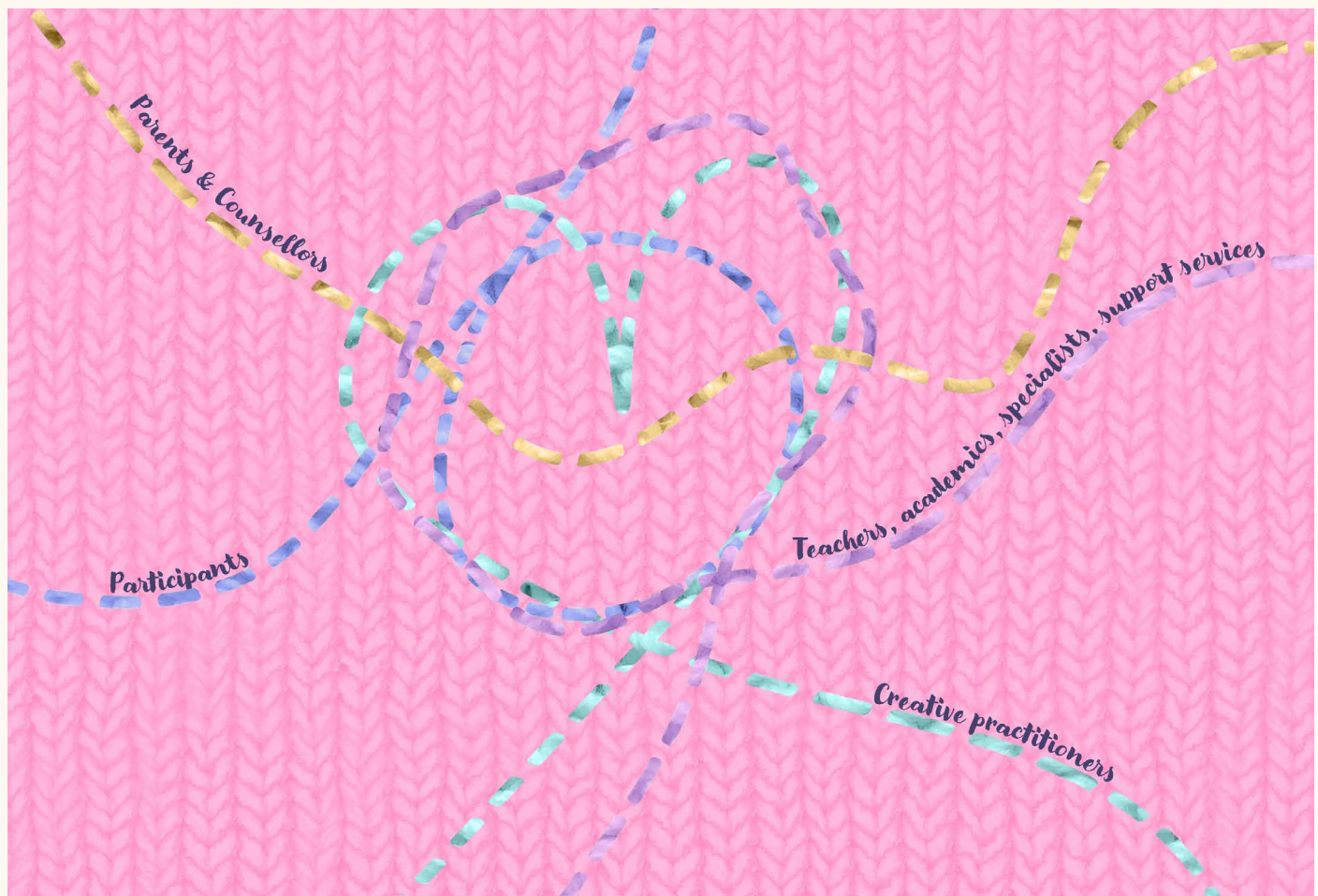
The school-based participants worked in two groups, notionally gender based but overlaid with where individual young people felt most comfortable. One young person recruited via RSACC attended workshops with a parent.

Counsellors from RSACC and parents of survivors engaged via RSACC contributed their observations and experiences of the impact of peer sexual abuse on young people to the project via interviews.

The project was guided by a Steering Group including representatives from RSACC, teachers (including a Safeguarding Lead), academic experts from Durham University and representatives from Changing Relations.

Other people who shaped the animation and education programme were artists, creative practitioners and experienced educators through their delivery of the project and teachers who supported the young people in project participation.

The young people formed the heart of the project, with other contributors weaving their support around them.



It enables us to create something that visually and aurally represents young people's reality.

It is an artform that many young people consume, are comfortable with and find appealing.



Why animation?



It is a useful tool to enable anonymity which makes young people feel more comfortable when sharing their stories and offers safeguarding protections.

It offers potential to "weave" together a variety of different perspectives

Project Principles

The project is designed on the core principles of lived experience, co-production and creativity: supported by a framework of care.

Lived Experience

Working with people with lived experience is critical to ensuring that the final art works that are created are truthful and speak to the reality of young people's lives – making them more impactful and relatable for future audiences. For participants it provides an opportunity for their perspectives to be heard and for them to contribute to making a positive difference – both of which can be critical in the face of experiences which can make someone feel silenced and powerless. For audiences it encourages engagement with the art works and stimulates empathy.

Co-Production

Co-production demands and builds trust between collaborators enabling the knowledge, skills and experiences of all those who contribute to shape outputs to be the most truthful and highest quality that they can be.

Creativity

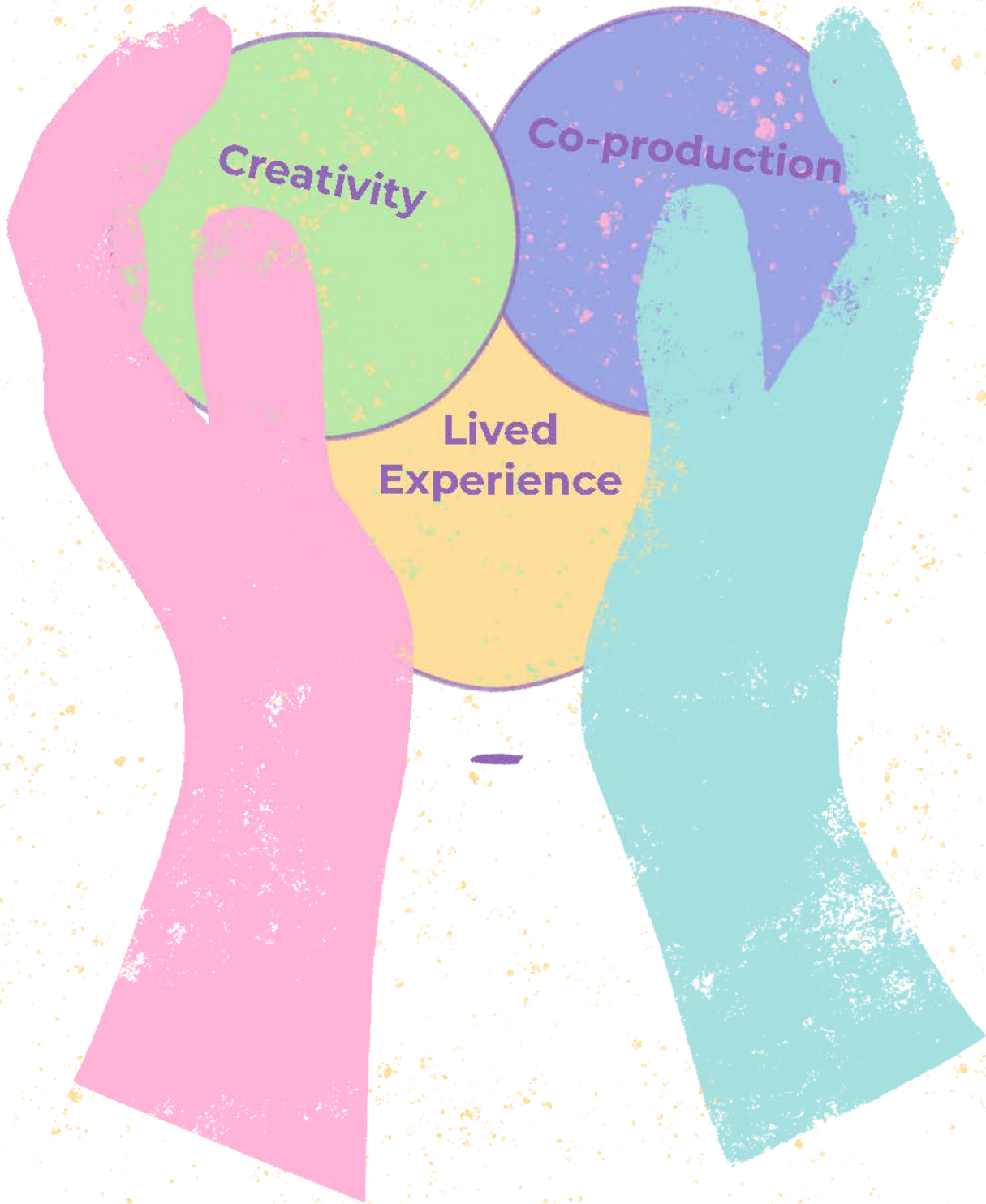
Creativity engages participants in a topic, supports building relationships, eases discussions about things they may feel uncomfortable discussing, facilitates the exploration of ideas, validates participant experience and raises awareness and empathy in both participants and audiences.

Care

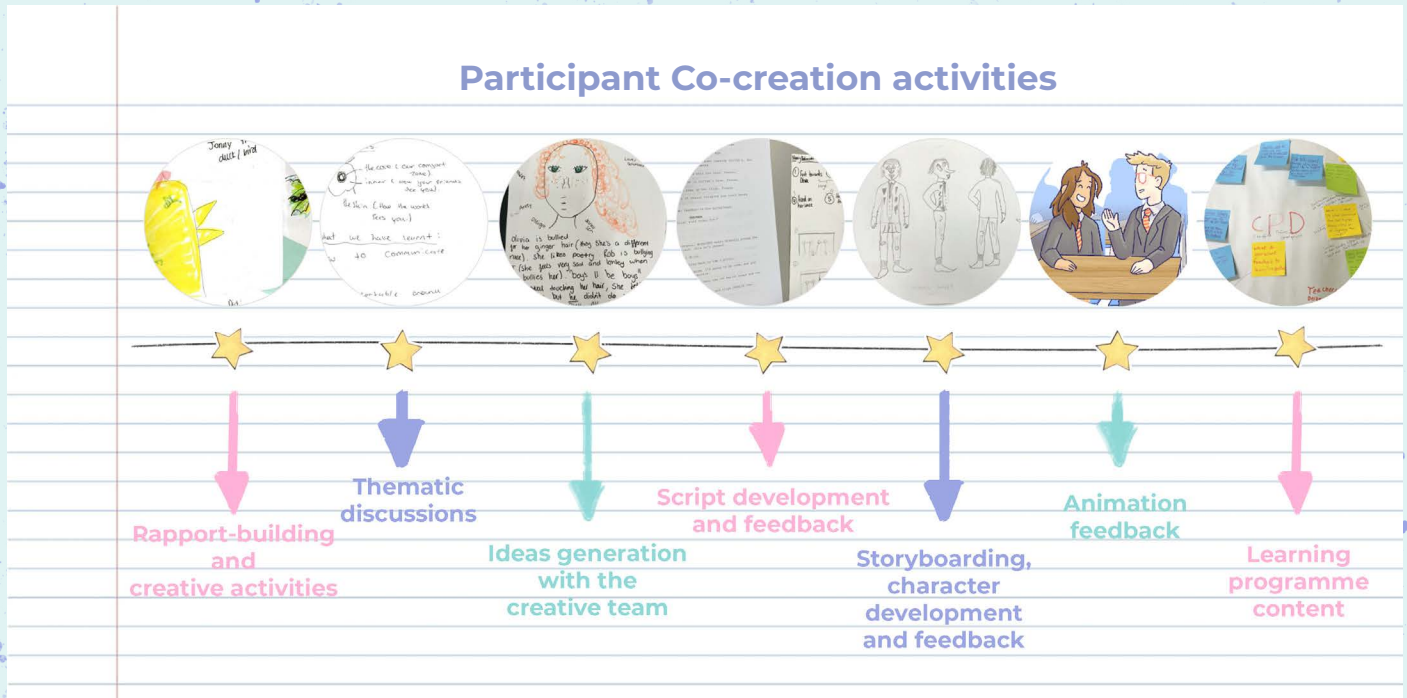
Care provides a framework in which lived experience, co-production and creativity can operate safely and effectively whilst modelling behaviours aligned with the change that projects like Weaving Stories of Peer Sexual Abuse aim to engender.



-C-A-R-E-



Weaving Stories of Peer Sexual Abuse Project Process



The Weaving Stories of Peer Sexual Abuse project worked through various stages beginning with rapport building and experimenting with creative activities. These formed the foundational relationships and developed creative confidence. We then moved on to thematic discussions where young people explored their observations, thoughts and experiences of peer sexual abuse. Creative activities were used to support these discussions: to offer alternative forms of communication; to offer fictionalised ways of exploring ideas; to continue developing participant creative confidence.

Participants worked with the creative team to generate ideas of what they would like the content of the storyline to be, the types of characters they would like to see, how they would like the animation to look and how they would like it to sound.

The project writer used this information to draft a script which the young people reviewed and recommended changes to. The sound artist used the information to create the soundscape for the animation, again with the young people feeding back their views.

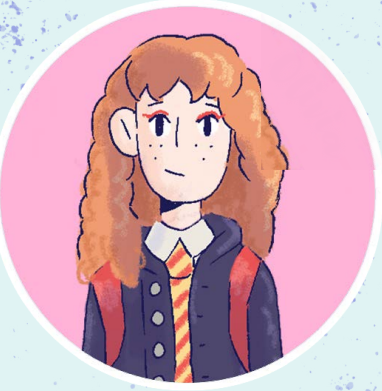
The visual information was used to create a brief for recruiting an illustrator to the project. The young people then shortlisted the illustrators who applied before the creative team interviewed them and made a final selection.

The illustrator worked with the young people to develop ideas for the characters before creating draft illustrations and a storyboard that the young people reviewed and recommended changes to.

To complete the creative process, the project animator created the animation, again with a feedback loop to incorporate the young people's views.

The final stage of the project process was to work with the young people to identify what they felt were the key messages that they wished to convey to their peers and adults and to develop and deliver learning sessions from these.

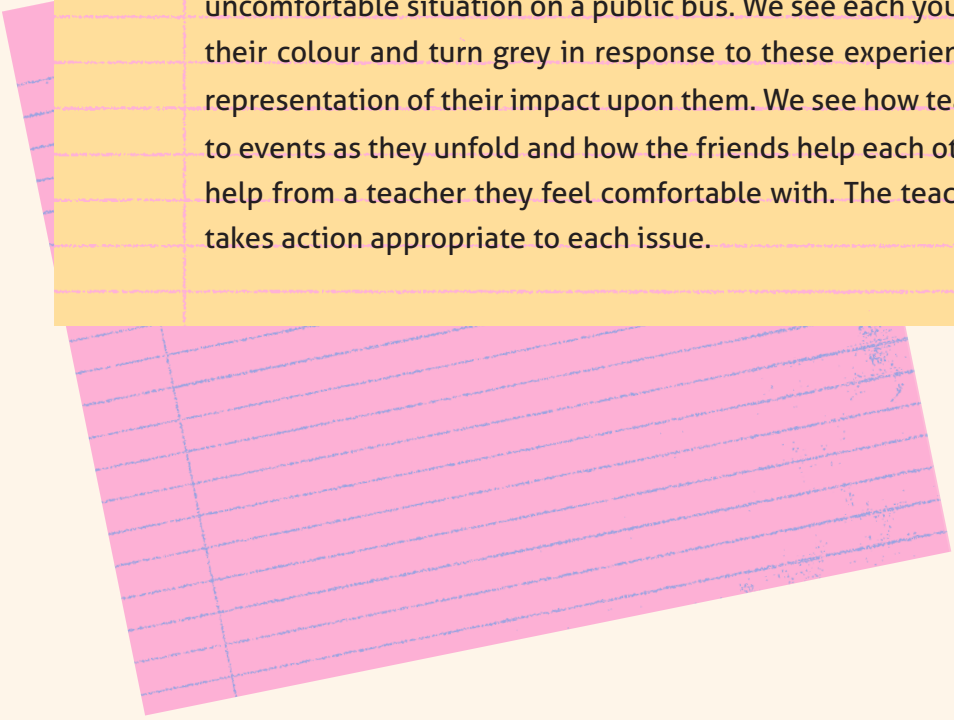
"[The illustrator] was really good at listening to our ideas, he made my ideas come to life and look cool"
- Participant





Animation Synopsis

Weaving Stories of Peer Sexual Abuse tells the story of four friends who go to school together. Over the period of the animation, we see each of them experience some form of sexual abuse: one has intimate images of herself shared by a peer and is subject to pupils across the school targetting her for this; one experiences homophobic bullying in school; one is touched by a peer without her consent; and one experiences an uncomfortable situation on a public bus. We see each young person lose their colour and turn grey in response to these experiences as a visual representation of their impact upon them. We see how teachers respond to events as they unfold and how the friends help each other and ask for help from a teacher they feel comfortable with. The teacher listens and takes action appropriate to each issue.



Findings and reflections from the co-production of the animation


The importance of care

Care as a baseline is crucial to the success of socially engaged creative projects such as Weaving Stories of Peer Sexual Abuse.

Given Changing Relations' placement of value on lived experience we know that many of our participants will be in some way vulnerable and we must therefore shape the project in such a way that they remain safe whilst contributing to it. Different strategies to achieve this need to be considered for each project and the specific participants but can include things such as workforce training; building in participant choice (e.g. to participate or not participate, how to participate, how they wish to communicate); ensuring appropriate support systems are in place and that participants know how to access these.


While it is normal for care to be centred around participants within this field of practice, there is often a lack of corresponding care around the creative practitioners involved. We believe that considering what care looks like for everyone involved is important in establishing an appropriate environment for this type of work. Over time Changing Relations has been developing a 'tick list' of things which can create a framework of care, however, we recognise that what care looks like will vary between projects and the people involved and that ultimately it is a question of the attitude brought to a project.

Changing Relations has a strong focus on creating and holding space to enable communication, exploration and imagination. This allows everyone in a project to contribute what they want in a way that is safe and constructive for them. To do this, relationship building between creative practitioners and participants, between participants, and between creative practitioners is crucial. Throughout this project a significant amount of time and energy was invested in relationship building, and at times of challenge in the project we would revert to relational activities to recentre those involved and recreate the space required to function effectively.



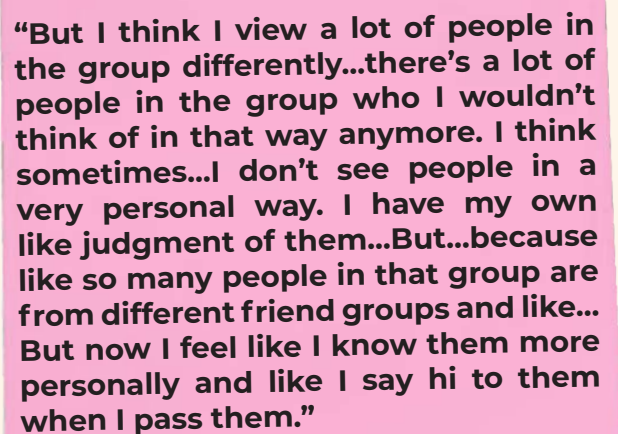
“Working with the team was the best thing. We had a good way of working together and collaborating.”

– Creative Practitioner
about the creative team



“I loved how she is very open-minded and always took things seriously, I always felt like I could tell her anything”

– Participant about a creative practitioner



“But I think I view a lot of people in the group differently...there’s a lot of people in the group who I wouldn’t think of in that way anymore. I think sometimes...I don’t see people in a very personal way. I have my own like judgment of them...But...because like so many people in that group are from different friend groups and like... But now I feel like I know them more personally and like I say hi to them when I pass them.”

– Participant about other participants

All members of a project behaving in a caring way is important in creating a safe space in which meaningful and potentially vulnerable conversations can be had. The Creative Practitioners involved in the project modelled this type of behaviour between themselves and towards the young people. Over time we saw the young people model more of this type of behaviour between themselves.

It is critical that care and caring applies to everyone in a project. Everyone deserves care and everyone can contribute to a caring environment.

Project Design when participants have lived experience

The Weaving Stories of Peer Sexual Abuse project was based on young people's lived experiences and observations of peer sexual abuse and the cultures that enable it.

Disclosure of specific experience is never asked of participants by Changing Relations facilitators. As such we put in processes to navigate participant vulnerability. This is particularly important when addressing topics where participants may not initially define their own experiences as problematic due to the normalisation of harmful behaviours and attitudes.

Working with people with lived experience defined how the project was designed:

- Clear and well communicated safeguarding and wellbeing processes were put in place (including for indirect disclosure) and young people, as well as the adults, collaborating on the project understood these
- There was a strong focus on relationship building between the creative team and the participants
- Flexibility was inbuilt to enable the team/project to adjust to whatever arose in sessions (e.g. appropriate staffing levels, content adjustments)
- No one was forced to attend sessions in the school or non-school settings (associated with this we saw young people choose not to attend as they faced individual challenges – for parts of sessions, specific sessions and longer term)
- Content and activities were designed to support participant wellbeing and avoid harm

Co-production Reflections

Co-production needs to be shaped to meet the needs of the specific participants. For example:

- The school-based participants engaged with the script, illustrations and animation at a detailed and complete level. For the RSACC-recruited survivor this wasn't appropriate given their experiences and we made adjustments, including a script summary to check they felt confident about its truthfulness, and we created an abbreviated storyboard with the points removed that we knew were triggering for them. This approach was discussed with them and their parent with opportunities for various degrees of engagement (including no engagement) explored as needed
- Young people's comfort in participating and explicitly talking about peer sexual abuse varied as did their comfort with expressing themselves in specific settings. To enable participation we included different forms of communication to meet different needs and preferences, e.g. writing on post it notes, speaking in pairs/small groups/large groups, speaking with a creative practitioner, writing, creating visual representations

Co-production needs to be explicit for participants. It is important that they understand the scope of their control over the output and what the power balance is between them and the creative practitioners involved in the project when making decisions. Within Weaving Stories of Peer Sexual Abuse, the creative practitioners were open and honest with the participants. The reasoning behind opinions and decisions was explored with the young people, including the need to balance what a range of people contributed. This meant that young people understood that the project was entirely collaborative and could see their, and others', contributions within the final animation.

Young people felt involved in the project, that it reflected their inputs and above all they enjoyed the collaborative process.

Co-production is not just about how the participants are involved in a project but also about the creative practitioners' involvement as well. In this project a relatively large team of creative practitioners worked extremely collaboratively to support each other, generate ideas, problem solve and create an exceptional experience for the young people along with a high-quality creative output.

Co-creating the scene on the public bus





Terminology

The project team reflected on what terms would best engage young people in the topic of peer sexual abuse. To make our choices we drew on the expertise of the Steering Committee members, research and practice.

Impact Instead of Severity

We recognised that the commonly used terms 'low-level' and 'high-level' suggest a hierarchy of harm and might inadvertently minimise the impact and experience of behaviours that are considered 'low-level', in particular when these are experienced cumulatively.¹¹

Following consultation with the Steering Committee, facilitators therefore directed discussions with the young people to focus on impact rather than using an external determinant of severity.

Understanding impact enables young people to ask for help about situations and behaviours that would otherwise be classed as 'low level', but which can feed into a culture which enables sexual abuse.¹²



¹¹ Young Lives Research Center, AYPH. Allnock, D. and Atkinson, R. (2019) 'Snitches get stitches: School-specific barriers to victim disclosure and peer reporting of sexual harm committed by young people in school contexts', *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 89, pp. 7–17. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2018.12.025>.

¹² Rabe, J. (2025) 'Raising the Volume: Why we need to listen to young people in understanding and preventing sexual violence', *International Network to Tackle Sexual Abuse against Children*, 11 June. Available at: <https://www.intsac.org/post/raising-the-volume-why-we-need-to-listen-to-young-people-in-understanding-and-preventing-sexual-vio>.

Continuum of Sexual Abuse

It was important to encourage the young people to think about broader experiences of sexual abuse beyond the severe physical acts typically associated with the phrase.

We introduced the concept of 'discomfort'¹³. This enabled a wide variety of experiences, behaviours and attitudes to be discussed not only enabling a fuller picture to be created but also enabling young people to learn that others had had similar experiences too.

Within discussions 'discomfort' covered a huge continuum including being stared at, being smiled at, verbal harassment, unwanted touching and intimate image sharing.

Fluidity of young people's identities

We recognised that:

- Many young people who cause harm through peer sexual abuse and the cultures that enable it also experience harm themselves at the hands of others.¹⁴ These classifications are not mutually exclusive
- Many subtler behaviours are so normalised and embedded in young people's everyday interactions that the notion of 'offender' is not understood or meaningful
- Young people may have no intent to harm others and, because of the normalisation of their behaviour within their community (and wider society), not recognise their impact
- There is a stigma associated with the labels of 'perpetrator' and 'offender' which can hinder discussions about the topic¹⁵
- Young people have a breadth of experiences of peer sexual abuse and the cultures that enable it and may not recognise themselves as 'survivors' or 'victims'

Within the project we successfully used the terms 'person who was harmed' and 'person who harmed'¹⁶ which reflected the young people's every day, situational experiences.

"Every time I've spoken to somebody's mam about bullying that [my daughter's] had... and said, look, can you have a word? It's not on...it's a lot of the times when they've replied they've been 'I've went through exactly the same thing with [my daughter]. I don't understand why she's bullying [your daughter]'. And that's one thing that stuck with me. I was like, every time I speak to someone their kid is going through exactly the same thing, or have been through exactly the same thing...every time I've spoken to another girl's parent, they've said we've had the same issue with her and pictures and she knows exactly what it's like."

– Parent of a child accessing RSACC services

¹³Rabe, J. (2025) 'Raising the Volume: Why we need to listen to young people in understanding and preventing sexual violence', International Network to Tackle Sexual Abuse against Children, 11 June. Available at: <https://www.intsac.org/post/raising-the-volume-why-we-need-to-listen-to-young-people-in-understanding-and-preventing-sexual-vio>.

¹⁴McKibbin, G., Kuruppu, J., Hackett, S., Lynch, O., Hamilton, B. and Dixon, S., 2025. The child behind the victim: Survivor experiences of children's harmful sexual behavior. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 163, p.107277.

¹⁵Hackett, S., Darling, A.J., Balfe, M., Masson, H. and Phillips, J., 2024. Life course outcomes and developmental pathways for children and young people with harmful sexual behaviour. *Journal of Sexual Aggression*, 30(2), pp.145-165.

¹⁶Safeguarding Network (2022) 'Safeguarding Network Summary of KCSiE-changes 2022'. Safeguarding Network. Available at: <https://safeguarding.network/content/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Safeguarding-Network-Summary-of-KCSiE-changes-2022-2.pdf>.

Significant Contexts of Peer Sexual Abuse Identified by Participants

The behaviours identified as most significant by young people participating in the project were:

- Sexist comments and catcalling: e.g. terms such as 'slag' and 'slut' aimed at girls and homophobic language aimed at boys and LGBTQIA+ young people
- Nonconsensual touching, inappropriate touching and groping
- The pressure to share private images and the negative consequences when shared without consent. Some RSACC counsellors spoke of the cultures of slut shaming and bullying experienced by the victim-survivor while a parent of a survivor accessing RSACC spoke of images being held over their child as an ongoing threat

"Making sexual jokes or like gestures are common. So, people don't know when it's like not okay to do it"

"I feel like if people typically touch the people around them, it's a joke because it is common at this age"

Key Messages from Participants

For Young People

Participants identified prosocial actions that they felt young people could take to change the culture and behaviours they see around them. They felt that 'speaking up' was important and that there were direct and indirect strategies that young people could use to help people who are being harmed by peer sexual abuse e.g. calling out, reporting, comforting. They recognised that there was no one 'right' approach as choosing the strategy depended on an assessment of your own safety, comfort and confidence before pursuing an option.

Participants wanted the animation to act as a prompt for reflection, encouraging young people to recognise the impact of their own and others' actions. The animation makes the impact of harmful behaviours visible by characters losing colour and turning grey – participants wanted to encourage empathy even when impact isn't known.

"I think it's hard to get through because they don't realise what they're doing is wrong until they actually see the impact of it, or it happens to them"

Participants identified clear advocacy messages for their peers including:

- Challenge stigma and isolation
- Normalise calling out bad behaviour
- Become more aware of the impact of their own actions and those of others

For Schools and Other Education Settings

Participants felt that if a teacher is considered to be approachable to ask for help academically, they are also often felt to be approachable to ask for help pastorally (and vice versa).

Participants noted that young people might show indirect signs of distress as an attempt to disclose. They wanted teachers and adults to be more sensitive and aware of these indirect signs (e.g. changes in behaviour) and to look into what might be causing these.

Participants observed that teachers appear to have preconceived notions or stereotypes about them which influence their responses. Common stereotypes included the 'quiet' student and the 'disruptive/noisy' student. A young person (recruited via RSACC and contributing via their parent) said that although they had done "adult" things they needed adults to remember that they were just a child. Participants wanted teachers and adults to look beyond stereotypes and judgements.

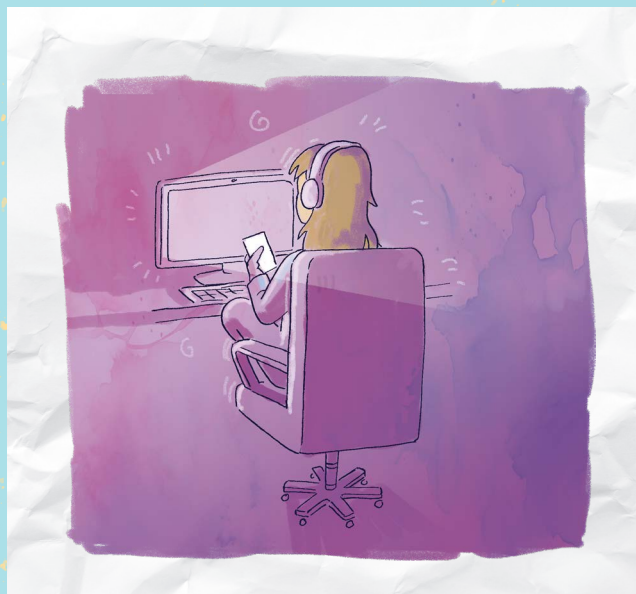
Participants felt uncertainty about school responses after disclosing and reporting peer sexual abuse. Young people were concerned that they wouldn't be believed and that following disclosure they themselves may be penalised. They saw "snitch" culture among peers as a particular barrier to seeking help, fearing bullying and isolation after disclosure.



"Matilda! As soon as I heard yelling I knew it was you. Detention. My classroom. Break."

"[remember] that she still is child at the end of the day, like she's just made mistakes...the children in our story [the animation] ...just remember they're children at the end of the day"

– Message from young person via their parent



Insights from Sharing the Animation

Sharing with Young People

The animation was shared with Year 9 students as an assembly to the whole year group and as a one-off workshop in a County Durham school. The assembly focussed on being an active bystander while the workshop focussed on the impact of abusive actions and "snitch" culture.

Across both the assembly and workshop the fact that it was grounded in real life experiences was impactful with young people frequently reporting feeling empathy for the characters in the animation.

Some students referenced how normalised the experiences in the animation are:

"It made me feel sorry as it said it was based on real life things"

"[I] feel sorry to people who have to go through something like that"

"Boys act like normal secondary boys"

"Shocked – some of the behaviour I saw I thought were normal activities"

With others explicitly picking out themes in the animation which reflected their specific experiences:

"Homophobic bullying – related to me. Catcalling/name calling – relatable. Touched when not wanted – relatable. Made me think of an experience online happened to me."

A number of young people reflected that the normalisation of harmful attitudes and behaviours might mean they are not paying attention to them:

"[Realising] how often it happens. Have I witnessed something but not thought about it?"

Some of the young people who took part in the lesson developed this further, suggesting that they would change their behaviour as a result.

Across the feedback there was some indication of victim blaming attitudes as well as feeling that cis-males were being unfairly portrayed as being bad and with insufficient recognition that females also cause harm.

"[I'm going to] take things more seriously looking out for bad things happening"



"Why did Tannah even send the photos?"

"I think it highlighted all men as bad people and did not recognise women can do the same."

Across the cohort attending the assembly¹⁷ and the workshop¹⁸ young people reported being:

Slightly more confident spotting discomfort due to peer sexual abuse

Slightly more likely to support someone who is being harmed by peer sexual abuse

"I'm more aware of stuff that could be happening to other people"

"I know what can make people uncomfortable"

"[I'm going to start] helping people who look like they are in an uncomfortable situation"

Slightly more likely to speak up about peer sexual abuse

"I may not have done something in the past but will now"

"[I'm going to start] taking action if I witness someone making someone else uncomfortable"



In addition, young people attending the workshop reported being:

Slightly more knowledgeable about the seriousness and impact of peer sexual abuse

Slightly more likely to tell a trusted adult or access a support service (despite qualitative feedback also including concerns about the consequences of "snitching")

"[I'm thinking about] what other people have been through"

"[I'm going to] tell a trusted adult if it does ever happen to me or my friends"

"What would happen to the snitches?"

¹⁷ Cohort 250, 165 provided feedback, 41.2% female, 56.4% male, 2.4% other genders

¹⁸ Cohort 34, 34 provided feedback, 47.1% female, 50.0% male, 2.9% non-binary

Sharing with Teachers

The animation was shared with teachers in a variety of settings: at a celebration with the participating young people; in a large-scale setting with only teachers after school; during the assembly with Year 9 students; and, in a small focus group of teachers.

Many teachers commented on the animation being “thought-provoking” and recognised the value of hearing the student voice. However, they were concerned that the nuance would not be understood by students watching the animation.¹⁹ Frustration was also expressed at the stereotyping of teachers and in particular a desire expressed for the teacher that the young people approach for help to look more neutral, rather than “cool”. This is aligned with both teacher and student participant reports of the wide range of teachers that students choose to approach for help (despite the students requesting that the teacher approached for help in the animation to have “Miss Honey vibes”).

When watching the animation for the first time it could have a significant personal impact on teachers, for example leading to them feeling “disappointed”, “under-valued”, that it was “critical of teachers” and that there was a “transferring of blame”. This also linked to concerns about what the implications were of what was potentially being asked of them in a sector which is already extremely stretched and where individual teachers work with a large number of young people.

However, watching the animation more than once affected how the animation was viewed, increasing teachers’ focus on the young people’s perspectives. For example, one teacher described her change in perspective across multiple viewings of the animation:



“On first watching, which was in the presence of those who created the film, I felt disappointed that they felt that way because I feel I do listen, had listened to them in the past and supported them well. Because of that, I was hoping for a more positive slant to the story line. I came away wondering where I had gone wrong and disappointed students felt that way about school.

The second time watching I engaged with more of the content of the animation and wasn't trying to identify characters within it. This time, I didn't feel like the film was so much of a personal attack. Not feeling that way allowed me to take in the story line better which I understood much more upon watching this time.

The third time watching, I saw the film in a different way again. The content / storyline was very clear. One particular example was the bus scene. The second time watching, I was sad that the man on the bus was perceived to be a negative person when he could be an innocent bystander. This time, I watched feeling like what the girl was experiencing was actually happening.”

Sharing in both a large-scale setting and a small-scale setting with teachers, it is clear that most value is gained in a small-scale setting, which allows for a safe environment to explore, learn and have nuanced discussions. The additional context of experience and prevalence (at a national and school level) is really important for teachers to understand, as staff without safeguarding responsibilities tend to know far less due to the safeguarding process itself e.g. if a teacher doesn't interact with a given student they will often know nothing or only enough to ensure specific procedures are implemented around a specific student(s).

Some of the issues raised within the animation are extremely challenging because they confront deep-rooted social norms. It is critical that when using the animation that schools are placed within the context of wider society and the specific communities a school is based in.

Sharing with Other Professionals

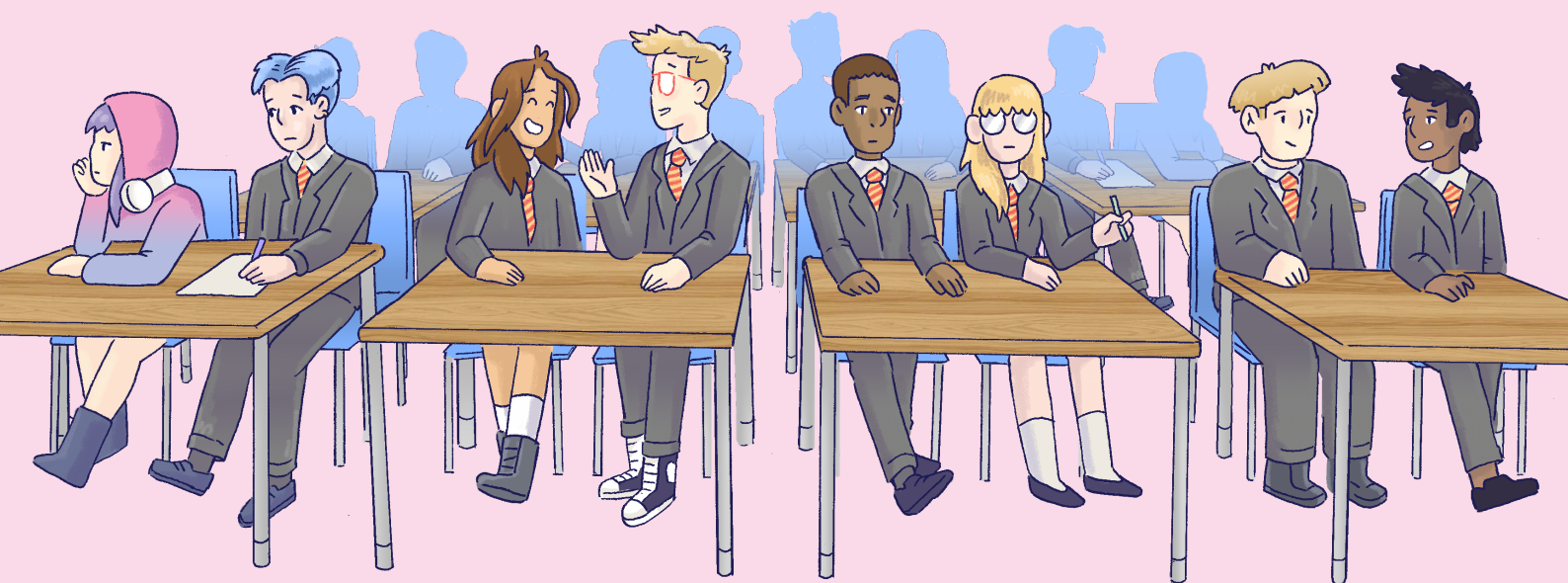
The animation was shared with other professionals via webinars and face to face presentations. Those attending included social workers, counsellors, youth workers, academics, local government, specialists from the charity sector, police officers and representatives from Police and Crime Commissioner offices.

Key things that this audience picked out as being of particular value within the animation were:

- That it reflects young people's experiences
 - "Powerful and true to life of what we hear every day"
 - "It felt very realistic. It felt like a real school environment and showed the challenges of young people"
 - "Really liked the voice of survivors"
- That it reflects the complexity of the challenge
 - "Great work – shows how complex the issue is to tackle"
- The clear portrayal of impact of different harmful behaviours and how they accumulate
 - "The animation helped to highlight how the 'little things' can be a huge issue to individuals"
 - "Really loved how it showed all the smaller impacts that all add up to become big impacts"
- The reflection of how normalised many harmful behaviours are and how subtle they can be
 - "I think it came across as normal behaviour in school so not that hard hitting at first, however that is the point - it is so normalised we have almost come to accept the behaviour"

This audience felt that they would like to see the animation and associated learning programmes rolled out in schools both for young people and for teachers. There was a recognition of the challenges of this, such as capacity within the timetable and for teachers as well as teacher skills, knowledge and confidence. There was also an appetite for equivalent programmes to be available for other settings such as youth groups and residential homes and for parents.

Beyond direct delivery, members of this audience were interested in the animation and its associated research to help shape policies in settings involving young people.



¹⁹This was not borne out in the assembly and workshops. It is also worth noting that student participants felt that teachers did not understand their experiences (aligned with findings from Ofsted's 2021 Rapid Review of Sexual Abuse in Schools and Colleges).

What next for Weaving Stories of Peer Sexual Abuse?

The existing education programme that has been created for Weaving Stories of Peer Sexual Abuse is available for delivery in education (and other) settings.²⁰

Changing Relations is now entering the next phase of the Weaving Stories of Peer Sexual Abuse with draft aims to:

- Further develop the learning programmes associated with the animation (including for informal education settings) to raise awareness of the issues and young people's experience of them and to encourage attitude and behaviour change
- Create supporting resources that can be used to reinforce messaging
- Develop CPD for educators – for safeguarding leadership roles and those outwith such roles
- Use the animation and associated research to develop policy and practice in education settings
- Identify other settings where the animation and associated research may provide useful insight to encourage attitude and behaviour change (e.g. public transport operatives)

As an organisation we believe in working collaboratively and are keen to explore partnerships with other organisations, including where they feel that the animation and associated resources could add value to them and the people they work with.

To find out more about Weaving Stories of Peer Sexual Abuse, our current plans and the potential for future collaboration please contact:

Kate Gorman (Artistic Director) – kate@changingrelations.co.uk

Lisa Davis (Managing Director) – lisa@changingrelations.co.uk



²⁰To access this programme contact info@changingrelations.co.uk for further information

Thanks

We would like to offer our thanks to everyone who contributed to the project!

Participating Young People

(Full names have not been used to protect participants as all are under 18 and some are survivors of peer sexual abuse)

Ada, Alara, Alex, Alyssa, Caylin, Cody, Eden, Eva, Jaycee, Joseph, Josh, Kai, Kaicee, Kelsay, Lauren, Layla, Leo, Macy, Mika, Mina, Molly, Nancy, Tasha

Project Team

Bridie Jackson – Sound Artist and Musician
Izaak Gledhill – Facilitator
Sheryl Jenkins – Facilitator and Animator
Tom Kindley – Illustrator
Tracy Thomas – Facilitator and Photographer
Zoe Murtagh – Writer and Voice Actor Director
Megan Watson - Graphic Designer

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Alice Faith
Bridget Marumo
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Our Project Steering Group

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Kate Larkin (Rape and Sexual Abuse Counselling Centre Darlington and Co. Durham)
Kirsty Tate (Park View School)
Simon Hackett (Durham University)

Production Team

Claire Smith – Lead Teacher Support (Park View School)
Janelle Rabe – Academic Evaluator
Kate Gorman – Creative Producer and Evaluator
Lisa Davis – Executive Director
Sue Spencer – Wellbeing and Reflective Practice Mentor
Susanne Burns – Evaluation Mentor

Counsellors from Rape and Sexual Abuse Counselling Centre Darlington and Co. Durham and parents of participating survivors of peer sexual abuse who contributed their experiences and perspectives

Crisilda, Dave, Jodie, Laura, Morgan



