



The
Children's
Society

SERIOUSLY AWKWARD



SIX YOUTH GROUP SESSIONS

you simply **HAVE** to run

SIGNPOSTING

These are some great places to go if you need further support:

Before running any of the sessions:

- * Search the name of your local authority and 'safeguarding'. Your local authority website will contain information of who to contact if you are concerned about a child who may be suffering harm as well as local young people's health clinics. They co-ordinate how children are safeguarded and protected from harm in your local area.
- * Be aware of the ChildLine number: **0800 1111**. It is a 24–7 phone line that young people can call to speak to someone and get advice, whether for themselves or a friend.
- * The Children's Legal centre has advice lines for young people.
- * For leaders, the UK Safer Internet Centre offers a professionals advice line **0844 381 4772**.
- * Search online to find out about your local Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). If you suspect a young person is suffering from poor mental health, you should (with their parent or guardian) point them towards their local CAMHS by:
 - Asking the young person to speak to their GP who can refer them (they may need support in doing this).
 - Teachers or other school staff, health visitors, social workers or youth counselling services can also make referrals to CAMHS.
- * Visit **nwgnetwork.org** and ask them what services and provision around Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) exist in your area.

Within the session:

- * Each young person should have the freedom to participate in each session or not.
- * Each young person should have the freedom to share in each session or not.
- * Consider the age and understanding of young people in the group when raising issues around sex and relationships. If in doubt, check it out with your diocesan or denominational youth adviser.
- * Your group will be subject to the safeguarding policy of your church. Please ensure you follow set procedures, processes and legal protocols.
- * There should be confidentiality in the sessions unless you suspect that a young person is at risk of harm. If you suspect they are at risk, in conversation with your manager, make a referral to your local authority's child protection team or the police to intervene, support or protect a child. Sexual activity under 13 or a power imbalance in a relationship at any age is a safeguarding issue that should be reported.

Further information and recommended resources on topics such as mental health, eating disorders and self-harm are listed at childrenssociety.org.uk/youth-notes

The resources highlighted in pink are available from the link we emailed you. Or you can visit:

childrenssociety.org.uk/youth



WELCOME

In this resource you will find the latest insight from The Children's Society on some of the most challenging issues that face young people today. Our expert knowledge has been boiled down, crafted and refined into 'six youth group sessions you simply HAVE to run'.

These sessions will open up conversations on: self-worth, mental health, relationships, life online and much more. They're designed to make a tangible difference to your young people and encourage them to do the same for the most vulnerable young people across the country.

Our work always starts with listening to young people. This resource shares what we've learnt, so that you can be confident about discussing topics that can appear daunting.

Before you start:

- * The sessions are designed for Church-based youth groups aged 11–16 years old, and should take around an hour to an hour and a half. If you have less time, follow the essential stream – highlighted in yellow – to get the main teaching points across.
- * Know and use the golden rule – mentioned overleaf – throughout your sessions.

Printing instructions

If you would like to save on ink, read the whole booklet on screen and only print the session instructions (pages 7–13, 15–17, 19–21, and 23–30).

CONTENTS

Session one: Identity	7
Session two: Mind matters	11
Session three: Healthy relationships	15
Session four: Life online	19
Session five: Seriously Awkward	23
Session six: Make a difference	27

We would only endorse this resource being used when there are at least two Disclosure and Barring Service certified adults present.

Key

Pink text: highlights a resource available from the link we emailed you. Or visit: childrenssociety.org.uk/youth

Green text: highlights a footnote or link you can access at childrenssociety.org.uk/youth-notes

Yellow boxed section: is the essential stream, if you have less time but want to get the main teaching points across.

It is our hope that through these sessions your young people will learn the truth that they are:

'exquisitely valuable.

There is nothing

TOO SMALL OR

TOO AWFUL

for them to talk about

or that is beyond

GOD'S LOVE AND

FORGIVENESS.'





THE GOLDEN RULES

FOR RUNNING THESE SESSIONS

Be yourself.

Don't worry; you don't need to have all the answers. It's about opening up conversations and listening to young people. If a young person discloses something, it's a positive sign that they trust you and the best thing you can do is listen to them, take them seriously and be there for them. We want young people to come away from these sessions understanding they aren't alone and it is normal to face challenges in life. Your own experience will undoubtedly come in handy.

Read up.

Knowing more about the subjects will not only help you understand the issues more, but will also give you more confidence to run the session. Start by reading the signposting section (mentioned earlier), your organisation's policies and of course, read the sessions before you run them!

Look after yourself.

First, that means having all necessary safeguarding procedures and referral processes in place, for your own safety and the young people's. Know who you should speak to if someone discloses something to you.

Create a safe space.

We have suggested some **Ground rules**. Discuss them with your group and explain that if they do have something they want to share outside of the sessions, they can talk to you afterwards. It's not a bad idea to tell parents and guardians you are running the sessions, they may know things you don't.

Adapt.

We don't know your youth group – how chatty, mature or informed they are. Please chop and change the sessions to suit your group. You need to judge whether some elements are appropriate, as this resource is designed to open up conversations on tricky topics. For example, if you know that some people in your group suffer from eating disorders, make sure your sessions are sensitive to that and consider running future sessions on any issues that arise.

Empower others.

You may have some young people who are showing real signs of leadership. Why not ask them to lead some elements of the series? And always give time and space to listen to everyone's feedback.

'God doesn't call
the qualified,
he qualifies the
called. God takes
us warts and all.

**CHRISTIANITY
ISN'T ABOUT
BEING PERFECT.'**





SESSION ONE:

IDENTITY

Aim

To set the scene for future sessions. The key message is to convey the ground rule that: 'there is nothing so awful or so little we cannot speak about it.'

Learning outcomes

- * To affirm the inherent value of everyone, as people made in God's image.
- * To convey the normality of facing issues as you grow up. **The Good Childhood Report** highlights how life can be tough for teenagers and how it varies across countries and genders.

Materials needed

Visit childrenssociety.org.uk/youth to access handouts highlighted in **pink**.

- * Enough pens and paper for each young person.
- * Positive messages for each young person for the opening activity (if you choose that option).
- * Newspapers and/or glossy magazines to cut out from.
- * A pack of M&Ms.
- * A Bible.
- * A **'Trusted Five'** postcard for each young person.
- * Flipchart paper and pen.

- * Background music for personal reflection.
- * A printed copy of the **Ground rules**.
- * An anonymous comments box (if you chose that option in 'The ground rules' section).

Reality today

- * **Approximately 1 in 13 teenagers will self-harm in the UK by the age of 16.**¹

Icebreaker (5-10 minutes)

- * Open the pack of M&Ms and ask your group to pass it around. If they want to take one, they have to answer one of the following questions, depending on its colour:
- * **Brown:** if you could choose to only eat chocolate, would you say yes?
- * **Yellow:** which character in the Simpsons would you be and why?
- * **Red:** do you prefer to risk things and sometimes end up embarrassed or do you prefer to play it safe and not take risks?
- * **Orange:** if you could invent a word to rhyme with orange, what would it be and what would it mean?
- * **Green:** say something about someone in the group you really admire or like about them.
- * **Blue:** would you prefer to be able to breathe underwater or able to fly up to 100m at a time?

¹That is to say, they will deliberately hurt themselves. The actual figure is probably much higher as most young people won't make a disclosure and therefore won't be counted. (Alumina, User Guide Selfharm UK, 2013).

The ground rules (5 minutes)

- * **Read** out the **Ground rules** and then explain the plan for the next six weeks and how it will touch on some very personal issues, so you need to set some ground rules.
- * **Read** out the suggestions, discuss them and see if anyone has any to add.
- * **Discuss** for the point: 'We understand there is nothing so awful or so little we cannot speak about it and if we want to share something sensitive or personal there are different ways we can do it.' Discuss and propose ways they can do this, it could be:
 - Talking to you or your co-leader afterwards.
 - Talking to their parent, guardian, teacher or doctor.
 - Putting out a shoe box for people to add anonymous comments if they don't want others to see.
- * **Ask** your young people to sign the paper and display for reference.

Get started (5-10 minutes)

- * **Invite** everyone to take a selfie with someone else. If there aren't enough phones or cameras to go around, adjust the numbers in the photo so everyone is in one.
- * **Ask** them to write what they see in themselves, not physically but how they see themselves as a whole person: mind, body and soul.
- * **Ask**. If everyone in your group knows each other and they will be affirming, ask them to write the talents, skills and great things they see in the person next to them in the selfie on a piece of paper.
- * Alternatively, you could **write** out affirming messages for your young people beforehand and give them a message with the qualities and talents you see in them.
- * **Give** each young person the affirming messages from you or the person in their selfie. Allow them time to compare how they see themselves against how others see them. It should be a positive and uplifting experience.

Starter (2-5 minutes)

- * **Ask**: How do you think God looks at people?
- * **Ask** a young person to read 1 Samuel 16.1-13.
- * **Explain** that being a shepherd was the lowest role in society and the youngest son would never normally be chosen to be king.
- * **Repeat** the question, 'How do you think God looks at people?' in the light of reading 1 Samuel 16.1-13.

Engage and faith in focus (20-30 minutes)

Give out copies of old (glossy) magazines, ask them in small groups to cut out bits they think that talk about what makes a person valuable, eg articles about dieting, money, relationships.

- * **Ask** them to share what they have chosen, why they have chosen it and if they agree that it is an important quality.
- * **Ask** your young people what they think is the most important characteristic in order for God to use them.
- * **Explain** the idea that God doesn't call the qualified, he qualifies the called. God takes us warts and all. Christianity isn't about being perfect, quite the opposite:

'On hearing this, Jesus said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice. For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.'"

- * **Write** out the first column and headings on some flipchart paper, leaving space for the other two columns.
- * **Invite** your group to share anything they know about these characters, using the table to fill in any gaps, so that you have a column of how they fell short and how God used them.
- * Allow space for reflection on the topics you have just discussed and ask if anyone has any thoughts on what it means for them today.

Name	How they fell short	How God used them
David	Was an adulterer and a murderer (2 Samuel 11).	David is accredited with half the Psalms and described as a man after God's own heart (Acts 13.22).
Noah	Got drunk (Genesis 9.21).	Noah was faithful for years by building the ark and saved his family and some animals from the flood.
Rahab	Was a prostitute (Joshua 2).	She saved the lives of two Israelite spies.
Moses	Was a murderer (Exodus 2.11-15).	He led the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt and to the Promised Land.
The woman who anoints Jesus' feet with perfume	Was a sinner, most likely a prostitute (Matthew 26.6-13).	Jesus said she did a beautiful thing for him and it will be told whenever the Gospel is shared.
Peter	Denied he knew Jesus (Matthew 26.69-75).	Peter was named by Jesus as the rock on which he would build his Church (Matthew 16.18).
The disciples	Fell asleep praying twice, on the night Jesus was betrayed (Matthew 26.36-46).	They started the entire Church, it went from a handful of them to over two billion people today!

Go deeper (15-20 minutes)

- * **Distribute** the 'Trusted Five' postcards.
- * **Ask** each young person to read a line from 1 Corinthians 13.4-8a.
- * **Ask.** Go around the group again but ask them to do it faster. And faster. Finally, go again but just saying the different descriptions of love, ie just saying 'patient', 'kind', 'doesn't envy' and so on.
- * **Discuss** what they think is the most important characteristic of love that Paul included in his list.
- * **Explain** that you are going to be talking about some tough topics that everyone, especially teenagers, face.
- * **Discuss** what being a teenager is like.
- * **Explain** that whatever challenges you face, when life gets tough, don't worry. Everyone faces it. It is perfectly normal, particularly as you go through adolescence. And there are people there to help you through those seasons.

You may want to explain the context of 1 Corinthians and the broader principle of how it is important to not just read verses in isolation. And mention that in the chapter before, Paul urges the church in Corinth to get along with each other.

- * **Ask** someone to read out The Message version of 1 Corinthians 12.25-26:

'The way God designed our bodies is a model for understanding our lives together as a church: every part dependent on every other part, the parts we mention and the parts we don't, the parts we see and the parts we don't. If one part hurts, every other part is involved in the hurt, and in the healing. If one part flourishes, every other part enters into the exuberance.'

- * **Explain:** the qualities of love on the 'Trusted Five' postcard were given as the 'most excellent way' to live with other people. It's important when talking about tough issues that there are people who love them and are like the verse in bold. As people who love us, 'will always look to protect them, always trust that they are telling the truth, always hope for the best for them and always fight for them'. So if any issues come up, there is nothing too small or too awful that they cannot speak about it to someone.

- * **Explain** safeguarding: sometimes if you share something personal, it is best for the person you share it with to pass on that information to someone else. So you won't be able to guarantee confidentiality if they share something, but you can guarantee you will only share it if it helps them.
- * **Explain** that the front of the postcard is to remind them what love should be like.
- * **Explain:** on the back you want them to write the names of five people who love them on the finger and thumb: their 'Trusted Five', who they can go to with anything small or big if they need to. It could be their parents, wider family, friends, youth worker, teacher etc.
- * **Explain** that you can also call ChildLine if you can't speak to anyone else, they will always be there to help you.

Pray (5 minutes)

- * You may like to play some background music during this next section.
- * **Give** your young people the space to pray and reflect on the session. You might give them some points to guide their reflection:
 - **Invite** them to read through 1 Corinthians 13.4-8a. Pause and pray at each characteristic that stands out to them.
 - **Encourage** the group to pray and thank God for each person they have written on their 'Trusted Five' postcard.
 - **Remind** them that 'there is nothing too small or too awful that God won't listen', so encourage them to pray about it if something comes to mind.
 - And if there is something, you could encourage them to share it with one or more of their 'Trusted Five'.

Takeaway activity

- * **Ask** them to take the 'Trusted Five' postcard home and put it somewhere they will see it.
- * You can encourage them to pray and thank God for those who love them, as well as to pray about anything else, big or small, that they are concerned about.



SESSION TWO:

MIND MATTERS

Aim

- * To introduce mental health and well-being as a topic.
- * To help your youth group to understand how they can support a friend who they are concerned about.

Learning outcomes

- * Young people understand that everyone has mental health, and the stigmas and ignorance surrounding mental health are exposed and addressed.

Materials needed

Visit childrenssociety.org.uk/youth-handout to access handouts highlighted in pink.

- * **A Be active Ways to Well-being postcard** for each young person.
- * **Jenny's story.**

Reality today

- * **About a quarter of the population will experience some kind of mental health problem in the course of a year.**
- * **It is thought that about 75% of adult mental health problems have their roots in childhood.**
- * **About 10% of children have a mental health problem at any one time.**

Icebreaker

Rock, paper, scissor empires

- * **Ask** everyone to pair up (or join in if there is an odd number). Explain the game of rock, paper, scissors (if necessary). Make sure you clarify that you show on the count of three.
- * Each pair has a best of three showdown. The loser joins in a conga line behind the winner and they find another winner to battle.
- * Keep playing until you have the final (where you might like to play best of five). Then crown your rock paper scissor Emperor.
- * If you have time, you could play again!

Get started (2 minutes)

- * **Ask** the group to stand up and to stay standing up until they disagree with the statement:
 - 10% of the UK population have mental health
 - 25% of the UK population have mental health
 - 40% of the UK population have mental health, 50%, 60%... keep going until you reach 100% or your whole group sits down.
- * **Explain** that everyone in the room, in the UK, in the world, has mental health. Just like everyone has physical health.

Engage (5-10 minutes)

- * **Ask** everyone to act out one way that they keep themselves clean and healthy, eg brushing their teeth, eating five fruit and veg a day. Make sure they all do different actions.
- * **Ask** one young person to volunteer to guess what each other young person is doing.
- * **Explain**, once they have guessed them all, that this is all part of what we call personal hygiene. 100 years ago, the term 'personal hygiene' didn't exist and most of the things they have acted out were not practised. Once people started taking care of their personal hygiene, life expectancy rose by 50% over a matter of decades.
- * From this, psychologist Guy Winch suggests that our quality of life could rise just as dramatically if we all begin looking after our mental hygiene, ie doing small things each day to stay healthy (the ways to well-being takeaway activities are perfect examples of this).

Faith in focus (10 minutes)

- * **Ask:** What do you think is the one single most important thing you should do as a Christian? Just one thing, nothing else.
- * **Explain:** when Jesus was asked the same question, 2,000 years ago, he could be accused of being a bit cheeky because he gave three answers: 'To love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind' and, 'Love your neighbour as yourself' (Luke 10.27).
- * Jesus and others throughout the Bible said following this three-fold command summed up everything else. Every other commandment in the Bible is summed up by this one: love God, love other people, love yourself.
- * **Discuss** how they think their answers compared to the one Jesus gave? How was it similar and different? How can we love ourselves?
- * **Ask:** what makes us a human being, eg body, mind, soul, appearance, community?
 - Go through each answer and ask: what would it look like if we loved each of these aspects fully? You might want to ask them to recall the characteristics of love from 1 Corinthians 13.

Pray (5-10 minutes)

- * It should go without saying that this activity won't exclude anyone in your group. If there is any chance that it might, please adapt accordingly.
 - **Ask** everyone to close their eyes and take a couple of long, slow deep breaths.
 - **Ask** them to put their hands on their feet and pray to:

Thank God for ability to walk, run, skip, for tickly toes, etc.
 - Then on their stomach:

Thank God for their favourite food, the last meal they had, etc.
 - Then on their hearts:

Thank God for the people they love, the things they care about, etc.
 - Then on their eyes:

Thank God for the things they see that make them laugh and smile, for all things bright and beautiful, etc.
 - Then on their heads:

Thank God for their minds, for how incredibly complex and powerful they are, etc.

Go deeper (30-45 minutes)

* **Re-emphasise:** we all have mental health and it is best seen as a scale we are all on.

* **Read** out the World Health Organisation definition of mental health:

'A state of well-being in which every individual realises his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community.'

(Repeat.)

* **Ask:** what is missing? Being happy.

* **Explain:** mental health isn't about how happy you feel. Having good mental health doesn't mean that everything goes right. Everyone goes through tough times. It is normal. Good mental health is being able to cope with normal levels of stress.

* **Ask:** what do they think well-being is? How might they keep good mental hygiene and well-being?

* **Explain:** the ways to well-being:

○ **The Children's Society asked young people aged 10 to 15 questions about their well-being.** Through those conversations, they have discovered some simple ways to keep good mental hygiene.

○ List each of the Five Ways to Well-being: being active, being creative, taking notice of your surroundings, connecting with others and learning.

* **Ask:** what they think might cause their mental health to worsen? ie being left out by your friends, exams, nasty comments, family arguments, etc.

* **Explain** that:

○ On their own those things don't have to cause poor mental health. Good mental health is being able to cope with the normal stresses in life, not how your day is going. But issues can snowball: **a quarter of the population will experience poor mental health this year.**

○ It is as important to get help with poor mental health as if you were physically ill. You should see a doctor if you have poor mental or physical health.

○ At the negative end of the scale, things have gone beyond the normal stresses of life, and you need to seek professional help.

* **Read Jenny's story.**

* **Explain:** Jenny was in situation that wasn't healthy and she wasn't at fault for it. She said, 'I used to cut myself a lot and wouldn't take off my blazer at school because I didn't want to show my arms. I was suicidal.'

* **Discuss:** what could they learn from Jenny's experiences? What led to change in Jenny's life?

* **Explain:** like physical health we have two ways to keep good mental health: prevention and professional help. We can prevent it happening by being active, being creative, taking notice of your surroundings, connecting with others and learning.

* **Explain:** professional help exists for mental health. If you ever feel life is too much, 'there is nothing so awful or so little they cannot speak about it'.

* **Explain:** it isn't always clear exactly when an individual needs professional help. Seeking help early on gives the best chance of recovery.

* **Share: 1 in 13 teenagers will self-harm in the UK by the age of 16.**

* **Discuss:** how they think they could help a friend experiencing poor mental health.

Takeaway activity (5 minutes)

Five Ways to Well-being: Be active

* **Explain:** each week as part of building up their mental hygiene, there is something fun they can do during the week (you can join in too!).

* **Give** everyone a **Be active Ways to Well-being postcard:** there is one for each week which they can write down their plans and record how they go.

* **Give** everyone two minutes to think of one extra way that they are going to be active this week. You could suggest: walking or cycling to school, playing with their dog outside, tree climbing, playing sport, dancing to their favourite song like nobody's watching.

'I define connection as the energy that exists between people when they feel

**SEEN, HEARD,
AND VALUED;**

when they can give and receive

**WITHOUT
JUDGMENT;**

and when they derive

**SUSTENANCE
AND STRENGTH**
from the relationship.'

Dr. Brené Brown



SESSION THREE:

HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

Aim

- * To discuss ideas of what love is and how relationships should work.
- * Not to focus on practical emotional and physical safety within relationship

Learning outcomes

- * To be able to assess how healthy a relationship is.
- * To discuss any warning signs the young people should be aware of in a relationship that may mean it is turning abusive or exploitative.

Materials needed

Visit childrenssociety.org.uk/youth to access handouts highlighted in pink.

- * **Session three questions**, cut up and in an envelope.
- * Some A4 sheets of paper and a pen.
- * A few **'Trusted Five' postcards**.
- * **A Connect Ways to Well-being postcard** for each young person.

Reality today

- * Too many 16 or 17 year olds are at high risk of sexual exploitation, domestic violence and mental health problems. For example, **teenage girls aged 16 and 17 are more likely to be a victim of a sexual offence than any other age group, with almost 1 in 10 saying they experienced a sexual offence in the last year.**²

Icebreaker (5-10 minutes)

- * **Explain** that you've designated four points in the room as: strongly agree, slightly agree, slightly disagree and strongly disagree, and they need to stand in the place that best represents what they think. But there is no right or wrong answer to the questions.
- * Make each of the following statements and then see if anyone wants to share why they've stood where they are:
 - The guy should always pay the bill on a date.
 - It is ok to fancy two people at the same time.
 - It is ok for a girl to ask a guy out on a date.
 - Love at first sight doesn't exist.
 - Long distance relationships don't work.
 - It is good to have a checklist of everything that you want in a partner.

²Yet 16 and 17 year olds are less protected from abuse and neglect than younger children. The police fail to take action against the perpetrator in more than three quarters of cases of sexual offences against 16 and 17 year olds. Only a tiny of proportion of cases result in a successful prosecution.

SESSION THREE: HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

Get started (10-15 minutes)

- * **Divide** your young people into groups and give them a pen and an A4 sheet of paper.
- * **Give** your group five minutes to write up their criteria for their perfect relationship.
- * **Ask** the groups to share with everyone else what they have come up with, drawing out any similarities and differences into a discussion.
- * **Ask** if they think they would be able to meet their own criteria? And how similar is it to a friendship?
- * **Explain** that a fundamental element of our humanity is that we are all imperfect, we all make mistakes. Even the person we fancy the most, who appears so perfect, isn't. If you are married or in a relationship you could share that about yourself or your partner. Healthy relationships take time to work at them, at times they hurt because at times we can all be selfish.

Faith in focus (5-10 minutes)

- * **Explain** that it doesn't mean that any relationship is ok. Some relationships are unhealthy, full stop. They can be emotionally, mentally and physically harmful.
- * **Distribute 'Trusted Five' postcards.**
- * **Explain** that one way to tell if a relationship is healthy is how much 1 Corinthians 13 is true of both people in the relationship.
- * **Read:** create an imaginary partner's name and then replace 'X' with their name.
X is patient, X is kind. X does not envy, X does not boast, X is not proud. X does not dishonour me, X is not self-seeking, X is not easily angered, X keeps no record of wrongs. X does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. X always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.
- * **Explain:** the impossibly perfect relationship would score 100% on this.
- * **Explain:** if, 'X does not dishonour me, X is not self-seeking, X is not easily angered, X keeps no record of wrongs.' is not true, then the relationship sounds unhealthy and it would be worth talking to your **'Trusted Five'** about it.
- * **Explain:** for Saint Paul and Jesus, being in a relationship wasn't the be all and end all. They saw singleness as a highly valuable gift God gives to some of us, that we should celebrate.³

Pray (5-10 minutes)

- * **Read** through 1 Corinthians 13 as a group, with each person saying their own name.
- * **Ask** them to each reflect and think which aspects they are best at and which they could work on.
- * **Explain** before saying these prayers that 'Amen' shows your agreement with the prayer that has been prayed. So it is important to listen to the prayer whilst it is being prayed.
- * **Ask** your group to sit in a circle. Invite the person to your right to open with a prayer then going clockwise round the circle, each person in turn says 'I agree, Amen', much like a Mexican wave. Then the next person on the right prays, and you continue round until everyone has had the opportunity to pray.

³ Matthew 19 and 1 Corinthians 7

Engage and go deeper (20-30 minutes)

* **Remind** them of the **Ground rules** of the sessions.

* Sitting in a circle, pass the **Session three questions** envelope to the person on your left and ask them to pull out a question. If they are happy to answer it, ask them to share the question and their opinion. Allow discussion. If they aren't happy to discuss it, ask them to pick another question. Here are some suggested points to cover:

* Why do you think it is illegal to have sex under 16?

- Sex is hugely powerful, it is not just physical, it's also emotional and mental. It requires maturity otherwise it can be damaging physically, emotionally and mentally.

* What makes sex safe, practically and emotionally?

- That you know the other person well.
- That you both consent to it, otherwise it is illegal. No matter what age. Forcing someone else into sexual activity is rape.
- Using an in-date condom.

* How can you tell if someone is committed to you in a relationship?

- Link back to the signs in 1 Corinthians 13. It is important to ask if you are both putting as much effort into the relationship as one another.
- Do they treat you with respect? Or do they control you: what you wear, who you are friends with, etc?

* The media is full of images of people with 'perfect bodies'. How does this affect the way we see ourselves?

- **Findings indicate girls have lower well-being in relation to satisfaction with their body, appearance and self-confidence. But these variations were not replicated in many other countries, suggesting that these variations are not inevitable.**

- However, body image is an issue for both boys and girls.

* Where do you think English young people's satisfaction with life came out of 15 countries?

- Answer and follow up question: **England ranked 14th out of 15 in a recent international survey**, ask them what they think about that?

○ You can read more into **The Good Childhood Report 2015**.

* What is the best example of a relationship you have seen?

- It doesn't have to be romantic. Perhaps share an example or two for you to share in case they don't come forward with one.

* In what ways do you think pornography may be damaging?

- It is often depicted only as a physical act and depicts other human beings as objects rather than people made in God's image.
- It can be violent and is rarely between real couples instead they are actors. It is the equivalent of thinking that the lives people live on TV soaps are reality.
- It can set falsely high expectations, is highly addictive and can destroy relationships and marriages.
- It isn't just something that boys watch. Taking an interest in sex is a natural part of growing up, what is important is to find healthy ways to channel that interest.

Takeaway activity (5 minutes)

Five Ways to Well-being: Connect

* **Ask** them how many did the activity they thought of last week, and how they found it? Suggest they keep doing it, if they enjoyed it.

* Give everyone a **Connect Ways to Well-being postcard**.

* **Explain** that God made us for relationship. Relationship with others, ourselves, our world and of course with God. So this week's Ways to Well-being is to connect. So at some point this week, have a conversation with a friend or family member you wouldn't have otherwise. If they speak to a well-known adult, they could ask them 'what is their favourite childhood memory' or to a peer, 'if they could meet one person in the whole world, who would it be and why?'

'The internet
has been a

**BOON AND
A CURSE**
for teenagers.'

J. K. Rowling



SESSION FOUR:

LIFE ONLINE

Aim

- * To increase awareness and promote internet safety.

Materials needed

Visit childrenssociety.org.uk/youth to access handouts highlighted in pink.

- * Following the session it may be worth sharing similar information and what your young people discussed with their parents and guardians. Visit childrenssociety.org.uk/youth-notes for resources you can share.
- * A collection of coloured pens or pencils, paper and sticky notes.
- * Download the Zipit app (available from the Apple and Google Play stores).
- * An example of an old social network account you have that still holds all your information.
- * An internet connection and a screen to watch [Exposed by CEOP](#).
- * [The 120 second spoken-word version of the Bible](#).
- * [Session four questions](#), cut up and in an envelope.
- * A [Be creative Ways to Well-being postcard](#) for each young person.

Learning outcomes

- * To share knowledge and ideas of how to respond to things like sexting⁴ requests.

Reality today

- * **In 2014: almost 50% of 3–15 year old's homes had a tablet, compared to 7% in 2011. There were 400 million Snapchats a day. More than three quarters of children aged 10 to 12 in the UK have social media accounts, even though they are below the age limit.**
- * **In 2013, in a survey of 450 teenagers from across the country, 6 in 10 said they had been asked for a sext, 4 in 10 created content and a quarter shared it.**
- * **Just 13% of parents thought pressure to do this came from online contacts, but of 16–17 year olds who felt under pressure to do this, nearly 4 in 10 (38%) said they felt this pressure from contacts they met online.**
- * **1.4 million Britons aged under 18 visited pornography sites in a single month.**

⁴ Sexting is sending and receiving sexually explicit messages, images and videos, primarily between mobile phones.

Icebreaker (15-20 minutes)

- * **Divide** into small teams, give them some paper and coloured pens or pencils and 10 minutes to design their own social media channel. They should be ready to answer the following questions:
 - What is the purpose of their channel and why would someone use it?
 - Who is allowed on it?
 - How do people interact with other people? And how easy is it to find other people?
 - What makes it different from other channels?
- * After 10 minutes draw your groups back together and ask them to present their channel to the others. Questions you may want to ask each group:
 - Have they thought about how to prevent online bullying and trolling?
 - How will they be certain that the person they are talking to is actually who they claim to be?
- * Invite other groups to share what they love about each channel.

Get started (10 minutes)

This is a fantastic opportunity to listen and be informed by your young people as to what sites they use:

- * **Give** each young person three sticky notes and a pen.
- * **Ask** them to write down the name or draw the logo of the three top social media sites they use or hear about the most.
- * **Ask** one person at a time to explain a site, what is awesome about it and how safe they think it is. Stick it on the wall (along with anyone else who has the same site) – the higher up, the safer they think it is. Repeat with each site, so you end up ranking the safety of each site as well as its popularity.
- * Why not take a photo of the wall and share it with their parents and guardians to encourage an open conversation between them and their child around how they use the internet?

Go deeper (20-25 minutes)

Remind them of the **Ground rules** of the sessions, Sitting in a circle, pass the **Session three questions** envelope to the person on your left and ask them to pull out a question. If they are happy to answer it, ask them to share the question and their opinion. Allow discussion. If they aren't happy to discuss it, ask them to pick another question. Here are some suggested points to cover:

- * What is the best video you have ever seen on YouTube?
 - * Is it ever safe to talk to strangers online?
 - Online, offline, adult or child, we always need to be cautious when talking to strangers online.
 - Think about it, would you share what you are sharing with a stranger? You can't be certain they are who they say they are.
 - * What should you do if you see someone being bullied online?
 - Don't join in and support the person being bullied.
 - Report the bullies, see if they know the different ways they can do this online and offline (ie using a report button, to CEOP, teachers or parents).
 - * How much should your parents know about what you do online?
 - You could read up and share what happened to **Breck Bednar**. It is a tragic warning as to what can happen if parents are kept in the dark.
 - **83% of parents trust their kids online but 42% of children know how to delete their history and a similar number know how to remove safety features.**
 - * If you could only save one website, what would it be and why?
- Ask:** do you know what age it is legal to sext?
- * It is illegal to sext under 18 or have a sext from someone under 18. The police treat it as an offence of distributing an indecent image of a child (someone under 18), even if that is you.
 - * **Watch** Exposed by CEOP.
 - * **Give** space for your group to discuss the video
 - * **Ask:** on a scale from 'not really', 'a bit', 'quite a bit' to 'a lot'; have your thoughts sexting changed?
 - * **Show** the Zipit app as a fun way to respond to sexts.

Engage and faith in focus (20-30 minutes)

- * **Ask** your group what they think the Bible says about the internet.
- * **Explain:** obviously the internet didn't exist when the Bible was written but that doesn't mean it has nothing to say. Instead, we have to find where the internet fits into the wider narrative and principles we see in the Bible.
- * **Read** the **120-second spoken word version of the Bible** to convey some of the wider narrative and principles:
- * **Give** time for reflection and discussion.
- * **Ask:** what were the common trends they picked up on (ie those in the key)?
- * **Explain** the internet and social media were created by humans and fit into this pattern of creation; with potential for good, but broken and in need of repair. Ask them what they think this means we can say about them?
- * **Divide** your group into two, giving one side the task of arguing why each point about the internet and social media is good and the other side why it is broken. Record the broken elements.
 - It is a megaphone; things that you say can be heard all across the world.

You can hear opinions and news from around the world you never could before. But often you won't have any control over who is listening.

- It's an elephant; it never forgets.

There is so much information available, on so many different subjects. No generation has ever had this. But if you share something on Instagram, WhatsApp or even Snapchat, screenshots mean you can't control it once it has gone which is why sexting is so risky.

Show them an old social media account of yours, if you have one. To demonstrate that things you posted 10 years ago are still on the internet.

- It's like a cafe or bar; it is a place where lots of people meet up and discuss things.

It gives us a space to interact with friends and people on subjects that interest us. But if the privacy settings on your accounts are weak or you use certain sites then anyone can listen into your conversation and strangers can approach you.

- * **Read** the list of the broken elements.
- * **Explain** that the Good News is that God is in the business of repairing brokenness and we should celebrate the good elements of the internet.
- * **Ask** your group what they think they can do to be part of repairing the brokenness of each point they raised. You may like to suggest:
 - Checking their privacy settings, not sending private messages to people they don't know and supporting friends if they are being bullied.

Pray (5 minutes)

- * **Give** each young person a sheet of paper and a pen.
- * **Ask:** each young person to write Twitter prayers (ie up to 140 characters long) about life online using the following hashtags:

#good and #repair

Takeaway activity

Five Ways to Well-being: Be creative

- * **Ask** how their conversations went, and if they connected with someone in a way they hadn't before.
- * **Give** everyone a **Be creative Ways to Well-being postcard**.
- * **Explain:** this week is about being creative. Give your young people time to think of a way they are going to be creative this week. It could be writing a story or poem, directing a video, drawing, painting, acting or anything else.

'I thought I finally
found someone that
cared about me

**BUT THINGS
STARTED TO
CHANGE'**



Becky



SESSION FIVE:

SERIOUSLY AWKWARD

Aim

- * To build up from previous sessions to discuss how the issues they raised affect the most vulnerable young people.
- * To share what The Children's Society has learnt about how to protect teenagers from harm, abuse and neglect.

Learning outcomes

- * To reflect on older teenagers' transition between childhood and adulthood and the challenges the most vulnerable can face.
- * To understand these are issues anyone could face. So you need to prevent an 'us and them' language developing. Vulnerable young people could be part of your youth group, friends of your young people or fellow pupils at school. It is best to assume that is the case, use inclusive language and challenge any attitude or language that excludes.

Materials needed

- * One copy of **Eva's story** and the **Seriously Awkward answer sheet**. One copy of **Warning signs and take action symbols** per three to four young people.
- * **Seriously Awkward petition sheets**.
- * **Session five PowerPoint**, an internet connection and a screen.
- * Pens, paper, sticky notes and a bin.

- * **The grooming line.**

- * A shareable and edible prize for a quiz.

Reality today

- * **Half a million 16 and 17 year olds face particular risk of harm because they are dealing with multiple issues like poverty, poor health or a lack of supportive relationships.**
- * **Children in poverty are over three times more likely to suffer from mental health disorders as those in well-off families, and nine times as likely to have psychotic disorders.**

Icebreaker (5-10 minutes)

Play the Seriously Awkward quiz with the group

- * **Display** the **Session five PowerPoint** and **read** out each statement 'At what age can you...?' asking your group to go to one corner or area of a room depending on what they think the answer is. They can answer either 16, 17, 18 years old or 'It's Awkward' (which means that the age you can do something varies depending on your circumstance). The explanation on the **Seriously Awkward answer sheet** will give you further details.
- * **Discuss** with the group their reactions to the different answers to the quiz – can they spot any inconsistencies in the law for 16 and 17 year olds?

Get started (10-15 minutes)

- * **Divide** them into groups of three or four, give them a pen, paper and three minutes to write down as many things they have learnt in the last few weeks about mental health, healthy relationships and being safe online.
- * **Ask** each group in turn to read out their answers. They only score a point if no other team has that answer. Give a prize to the winners.
- * **Explain** that they've learnt a lot and these issues are really important for all young people, especially if you face other challenges growing up. Share the stats from the 'Reality today'.
- * For Becky, it started when she was 12 and had a lack of supportive relationships.

* **Watch** Becky's video in the **PowerPoint** and **ask:**

- How did it all start for Becky? Do you think she knew the situation she would end up in?
- What do you think she might have been able to do differently to stay safe online?

Had a private profile, not talked to strangers online and talked to people, like they have in their **'Trusted Five'**.

- What were the different warning signs with Zak?
- What did she do that changed everything?
- What did she learn?

The grooming line (10 minutes)

- * **Explain** that most of the time, just as for Becky, there is a slow progression so that you don't immediately notice what is going on or can feel trapped into doing things you wouldn't do otherwise.
- * **Read** out each statement from **The grooming line** and ask the group to decide if it is something a boyfriend or girlfriend would do, or someone who is trying to exploit you would do, or both. Once they have decided, put the statements into different piles.
- * Leave space for them to reflect on the piles.

Faith in focus (10-15 minutes)

- * **Share** that in Paul's letter to the Romans, he says, 'Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God – what is good and acceptable and perfect' (Romans 12.2).
- * **Explain** that the message we can hear from the world can be like the message of the groomer: 'You are damaged goods', 'No-one will want you now'.
- * But Paul knows this is rubbish! We can't allow ourselves to believe the lies of the world: of the groomer, of the bully, advertising or anyone else like that. Instead we need to renew our minds with the knowledge that we are precious and valuable. So valuable that Jesus gave his own life up so that we enter into a relationship with God.
- * **Invite** your group to pass this message around. Ask them to stand in two lines facing each other.
 - **Ask** them to say the following to the person opposite them, making sure they say it slowly and make eye-contact: 'You are made in God's image' followed by 'You are incredibly valuable'.
 - The person opposite replies, 'Yes, I am made in God's image and I am incredibly valuable'. Then reverse roles.
 - After they have done this, ask one line to move down one place and repeat until everyone has spoken to every person in the other line.
- * **Explain** that when we know our true value, Paul says we will be able to discern what is good, acceptable and perfect. It will be clearer to work out the difference between a boyfriend or girlfriend, or someone trying to take advantage of us and get us to do things we don't want to do. You can also use the test of 1 Corinthians 13 from session 3.

So if someone tries to convince us to believe a lie – such as that we are damaged goods – or blackmail us with something we have done, we will know the truth: we are exquisitely valuable and there is nothing too small or too awful that is beyond God's love and forgiveness.

Go deeper, part 1 (2 minutes)

- * **Explain** to the group that turning 16 is an important milestone in anyone's life, as you start to make independent decisions about large numbers of things. But it's also a risky time, as you begin to explore adult life without having much experience of it.

Around the age of 16, young people undergo significant physical and emotional changes and can begin to socialise in new circles of friends and develop romantic relationships.

This period of adolescence is often referred to as an awkward age. Most young people get through this transitional period fine with support and care from their families. But young people who don't have a trusted or reliable adult to guide them need extra support and protection to keep them safe from harm, abuse and neglect.

Engage (10 minutes)

- * **Divide** the young people into small groups and give them a timeline of **Eva's story** and the cut up **Warning sign and Take action symbols**.
- * **Ask** them to read the timeline and in their groups highlight points where a) they think Eva is at risk of harm (using a **Warning sign**) and b) where they think more should have been done to protect her (using a **Take action symbols**).
- * **Ask** each group to feedback their thoughts and ask – what risks did Eva face? Where could she have done with extra protection and support? What will she need to help her recover?

Go deeper, part 2 (10-15 minutes)

Explain that clearly, something isn't quite right. The legal framework and support services for 16 and 17 year olds are awkward:

- * **Ask**. A teenager has to be under 16 to be protected by laws on child cruelty and neglect. Ask the group how this affected Eva?
 - At 17 the agencies believed her relationship with her boyfriend was domestic abuse rather than child sexual exploitation, which made it harder to protect her.

- * **Ask**. Many 16 and 17 year olds fall through the gaps between children's and adult services for things such as mental health services or housing. Ask the group how this affected Eva?
 - At 17, Eva was given a leaving care social worker and was being transitioned to independent living despite being extremely vulnerable.
- * **Ask**. Too often the needs of 16 and 17 year olds are overlooked by professionals and services. Support drops off at 16 when teens can be abandoned and seen as 'beyond help'. Ask the group how this affected Eva?
 - Eva's social worker's attitude was that 'she can look after herself'.

- * **Explain** that young people across the country, who could be in the local town, in their schools, church, or anywhere else, are not getting the help they need and the law fails to protect them. The **Children's Society's Seriously Awkward campaign** is calling on the Government to change the law to protect 16 and 17 year olds like Eva and Becky from harm, abuse and neglect.
- * **Share** that 16 and 17 year olds are at high risk of sexual exploitation, domestic violence and mental health problems. **For example, teenage girls aged 16 and 17 are more likely to be a victim of a sexual offence than any other age group, with almost one in ten saying they experienced a sexual offence in the last year.**
- * **Invite** them to sign the **petition online** or on the **Seriously Awkward petition sheets** and send it to:

Campaigns Team,
Edward Rudolf House,
Margery Street,
London WC1X 0JL

- * **Explain** by joining the **Seriously Awkward campaign** they are helping demand the change Eva and Becky needed.
- * **Reassure** the group that if they feel angry that vulnerable 16 and 17 year olds are not being properly protected, there are times when anger is justified. Explain that in the next session you will explore ways of creating change to such situations.

Pray (5-10 minutes)

- * **Give** out the pens and sticky notes and place the bin in the middle of the room. In a moment of quiet, invite your young people to pray by writing down conclusions to any of the following sentences.
 - Loving God, it isn't right that...
 - Loving God, I need help with...
 - Loving God, I get angry because...
 - Loving God, protect teenagers from...
- * **Invite** your young people to screw up their post-it notes and throw them in the bin as a way of showing they are prayers of lament. You may want to explain that there are many examples of prayers of lament in the Bible. They are prayers in which people don't hold back from bringing their complaints, anger at the world and sorrow to God in a very honest and raw way.
- * Conclude the time of prayer by thanking God that God is greater than anything or anyone and that there are people who we can talk to no matter what is happening, however small or awful.

Takeaway activity (5 minutes)

Five Ways to Well-being: Take notice

- * **Ask** your young people if they would like to share what they did last week to be creative.
- * **Give** everyone a **Take notice Ways to Well-being postcard**.
- * This week's takeaway to keep on top of your mental hygiene is to take notice of God's creation. Noticing the incredible world around us is an extremely powerful way to grow in mental strength. Ask your group to take notice of their surroundings this week: it could be the snap, crack and pop of their cereal, the flower growing through a crack in the pavement, the greenness of the grass or anything else – just don't let life drift by.



SESSION SIX:

MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Aim

- * To consider the possible value of campaigning.
- * To understand the difference our actions can make to lives of others.

Learning outcomes

- * To understand what campaigning is and how it relates to faith.
- * To learn how to plan a campaign and explore different campaigning tactics.
- * To learn the impact of campaigning.

Materials needed

Visit childrenssociety.org.uk/youth to access handouts highlighted in pink.

- * **Session six PowerPoint**, an internet connection and a screen.
- * One copy of **Scenario one, How to: Lobby a decision maker** and **How to: Protest** per three or four young people. Or one copy of **Scenario two, How to: Lobby a decision maker** and **How to: Plan an event** per three or four young people.
- * Information about your local MP.
- * One copy of **How to: Spread the word** and **How to: Get creative**.

- * A balance scale, a large weight and a large number of small weights (that weigh less than the large weight in total).

- * A video camera or mobile phone.

Reality today

- * **Children in care are five times more likely to develop a mental disorder than children living at home with their families, yet several studies indicate that only a minority (32%) of those diagnosed access Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services.**
- * **Many emotional and conduct disorders are linked to adverse traumatic experiences such as abuse and neglect.**

Icebreaker (5-10 minutes)

- * **Ask** everyone to stand in a circle, then to count either three or four people round the circle to their left. Now watch that person and mimic any movement they make – but slightly exaggerate it.
- * This should lead to everyone moving more and more as the movements become more exaggerated – you may need to reset it if it gets over the top!
- * **Pause** for thought: small actions can grow into something bigger and bigger when you 'take them with others. This is an idea that is going to be key moving into a session about campaigning.

SESSION SIX: MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Get started (5 minutes+videos)

* **Explain** that campaigning is about coming together to create a change that you want to see. It can tackle an injustice, encourage politicians to support something, reverse or stop a bad decision, or change the way people think about an issue. Here are some examples:

- Changing your community, eg Long Live Southbank: The Bigger Picture is a campaign to protect the Undercroft on the Southbank in London which is known as the birthplace of British skateboarding and has been home to skateboarders, BMX riders and graffiti artists for the last 40 years (16 minutes long).
- Changing attitudes, eg the Youth Suicide Prevention Campaign was created by zero2hero to raise awareness and change attitudes in Australia around suicide, telling young people to 'wake up' (three minutes long).
- Changing law or policy, eg the Children's Commission on Poverty involved 16 children spending months investigating the true costs of school and the impact this has on children in poverty. The inspiring 16 young people hosted an event in Parliament to share their findings to call on schools and the Government to make urgent change (three minutes long).
- Changing an institution, eg the Whose University campaign that organised students, educators, workers and community members to challenge the University of Minnesota's priorities in equal access and resources for underrepresented groups (six minutes long).

* **Watch** one or more of the above campaigning videos and animations (links are in the **Session six PowerPoint**) to give the group a flavour of the different types of campaigns which exist.

Go deeper (10 minutes)

* **Show** the campaign cycle **Session six PowerPoint** slide.

* **Explain** that sometimes problems may feel too big or complex to solve alone. But if there's an issue we are passionate about, starting small, working together and having a clear plan of what we want to do can have a big impact (much like the ice breaker).

Explain the different steps of planning a campaign with the group:

STEP 1: What's the problem?

* Campaigns usually start because we feel passionate about an issue and want to change it. Ask for suggestions to the following question:

- What issue or problem really gets you frustrated? For example, there shouldn't be homework.
- What do you know about it? Has it been talked about in the media, or do you have personal experience of it? For example, get set way too much homework every day.

STEP 2: What's the solution?

* **Explain:** You know what you want to change, but how do you go about it? Gather evidence – the more you know about the issue (eg homework), the more effective your campaign will be.

* **Ask** them to consider the following questions (you could use the idea of homework for answers):

- Why has this problem come about?
- What would a better solution be?
- What would be different as a result?
- Who can make that change happen?
- What can you do to persuade them to make that change?

STEP 3: How are you going to make the change happen?

* **Explain** that there are lots of actions you can take, like signing a petition, holding a demonstration, or getting the issue covered in the media. By using a combination of actions, you'll be more likely to get the attention of the decision-maker you want to influence. When choosing your action:

- **Think** how it will help you achieve your aim – everything you do should make a difference, so it needs to be appropriate for the person or organisation you're trying to reach.
- **Decide** on the type of language you need to use. You're likely to speak to an MP differently to how you'd speak to your neighbours or peers.
- **Prepare** for how people might respond and then plan the best way to get them to listen.

* **Explain** that you then need to make a plan:

- **Have** a calendar that says who needs to do what and when they need to do it.
- **Make** use of everyone's skills and interests.
- **Decide** and agree on key goals and deadlines. Split the plan into bitesize chunks so that you can keep track of your successes and where you need to make alterations.

STEP 4: Do it!

Now you need to get out there and make it happen!

Engage (15 minutes)

There is a choice of two activities for this section of the session. Separate the group into groups of three or four and either give them a **How to lobby scenario**.

1. Lobby an MP Scenario one

Give the group one copy of **Scenario one, How to: Lobby a decision maker** and **How to: Protest**.

Ask the group to read through the **'How to' guides** and then complete the activity described in **Scenario one**.

2. Lobby an MP Scenario two

Give the group one copy of **Scenario two, How to: Lobby a decision maker** and **How to: Plan an event**.

Ask the group to read through the **'How to' guides** and then complete the activity described in **Scenario two**.

Pray (10 minutes)

* **Set up** your balance scale, placing the large weight nearby and the smaller weights across the other side of the room.

* **Ask** a young person to read Philippians 4.6-7.

○ **Explain** that the Greek word (deēsei), often translated as 'supplication' or 'petition', means bringing an earnest or humble request about a heartfelt need to God in prayer. Much like we might do in campaigning, God wants us to bring our petition before him.

○ **Explain** that our heartfelt petitions may be about things that we have heard older teenagers can face, like **the 1 in 10 teenage girls aged 16 and 17 being victims of a sexual offence**. Or maybe it's the story of one of the young people you've heard or someone you know.

○ **Place** the large weight on the scales. Explain how they can feel like such big issues and objects and we can't see how anything can change.

○ **Invite** the young people to collect a small weight and bring a prayerful petition to God by placing it on the other side of the weighing scale. And continue until the weights are used up.

○ **Explain** that Paul instructs us to not worry and to make our heartfelt prayerful petitions known to God. When we do this, Paul says that 'the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.' However, it does not necessary mean the change we want will happen. We aren't in charge, God is. So we shouldn't be disheartened if the scales don't move.

○ **Explain:** equally, our prayers and petitions may change things. Lift the large weight so the scales balance. Then lift the large weight off completely.

○ **Explain** that our prayer and petitions can lead to miraculous things happening. Often God's answer to our prayers is asking us to be part of the solution: by campaigning, talking to someone, showing love or a million other ways. Overall, we can be confident that God has heard us, loves us, and the peace of God will guard us. Yet, we should not treat prayer as a formula whereby if we petition God, then God will have to do what we want. That isn't how prayer works.

SESSION SIX: MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Faith in focus and takeaway activity (45 minutes and may need a further session)

Five Ways to Well-being: Keep learning

- * **Ask** your group what they noticed last week?
- * **Share** the idea that God created creation to be noticed and enjoyed. **Read** out this quote from Shane Claiborne:

'All around you, people will be tiptoeing through life, just to arrive at death safely. But dear children, do not tiptoe. Run, hop, skip, or dance, just don't tiptoe.'
- * **Ask** if they can remember the **four previous Ways to Well-being** they have done so far (be active, connect, be creative, and take notice).
- * **Give** everyone a **Keep learning Ways to Well-being postcard**.
- * **Explain** that this week's activity is to keep learning. Learning doesn't just happen in schools. There are so many things you can learn outside the classroom. You learn how to do keep-ups with a football, to ride a bike, a dance routine to a One Direction song – the possibilities are endless!
- * **Explain** that without realising, they have been learning. Learning how to look after their mental health, stay safe online, have healthy relationships, support their friends and campaign.
- * **Ask** someone to read Proverbs 9.9.
- * **Explain** that learning is extremely important. In learning, there is always sharing. A teacher to a pupil, one friend to another, a parent to a child etc. So explain that the final activity is to share what they have learnt.
- * **Ask** them how they want to do it and who they want to share it with, let your young people take the lead. Here are some suggestions:

1. Create a video

- * **Watch** the Australian suicide prevention video linked to in the **Session six PowerPoint** as inspiration for creating a video about the last six sessions to share with others.
- * **Discuss** how far the video should be shared as a group; remember what was discussed with the life online session. For example, if you put it on

YouTube without any restrictions then anyone will be able to watch it, and once it is on there it could be there for years to come. Everyone should be comfortable with the decision you make and able to opt out if they like. You may want to share it with your wider church*, their school(s), friends and MP, depending on your message.

- * Either use the **How to: Get creative** guide to create your film (you may need to find another time to complete filming) and create a video to share what they have learnt and what they think everyone else should learn.
- * Or, if you have less time, ask them to each come up with one sentence of what they want to share about what they have learnt.
 - **Ask** them to write their messages on one side of some cardboard. If they are struggling for ideas then why not include some of the statistics from the 'Reality today' sections?
 - **Film** them each holding up the blank side of their cardboard and then turning it to reveal what they have written.
 - After the session, edit the content. Ask your group if anyone would like to edit the video.
- * **Show** the video in their church and at an assembly at their school. And why not hand out a **Seriously Awkward petition sheet** at the same time.
- * **Share** it on social media. Use **How to: Spread the word** for further ideas.
- * **Show** their video to their MP as part of meeting them and explaining why they think teenagers need to be better protected by the law.

2. Create a flyer

- * **Discuss** and let your group decide who the flyer should be for and what it should say.
- * One suggestion could be a flyer of their top tips that adults need to understand about young people. They could be tips on what you've discussed during these sessions and then photocopy them.

- * Why not also do the Seriously Awkward quiz (in the **Session five PowerPoint**) in a church service*? Ask the congregation to join you by signing the **Seriously Awkward petition sheet** to protect vulnerable 16–17 year olds whilst your young people are presenting to the church.

3. Or do something completely different! Use the originality and creativity of your group.

*Make sure you have asked your church leader if the youth group can share what they have learnt with the wider church in advance.

CONGRATULATIONS

We hope that you and your youth group would agree that you've just done 'six youth group sessions that you simply **HAVE** to run'.

Undoubtedly there are things your young people would like to explore further; we wish we could tell you what they were, but we probably don't need to.

Give your young people some space and time to write down and anonymously feedback if there is anything they'd like to talk more about or do as a group.

If you have any feedback for us, drop us a line at church@childrenssociety.org.uk

Acknowledgements

Thank you to everyone who has helped to create this resource:

To all who road-tested ideas, to The Children's Society staff who shared resources and experiences and to the young people who gave us their input.

Most of all, to **Ben Palmer** whose hard work and tenacity has made this resource possible.

Thank you,

Church Partnerships Team

It is a painful fact that many children and young people in Britain today are still suffering extreme hardship, abuse and neglect. Too often their problems are ignored and their voices unheard.

The Children's Society is a national charity that runs local services, helping children and young people when they are at their most vulnerable, and have nowhere left to turn.

We also campaign for changes to laws affecting children and young people, to stop the mistakes of the past being repeated in the future.

Our supporters around the country fund our services and join our campaigns to show children and young people they are on their side.

We are proud of our close partnership with the Church, who play a vital role in our work.

We want to work with every church in the country so that, together, we can change the lives of many, many more children.

'We would love to see churches up and down the country authentically engaging young people on issues that far too often go unaddressed because they feel daunting. Engaging and faith centred, these are six sessions every youth group should run.'

Andrew Weston and Sandy Nunn, United Reformed Church Youth Assembly Moderators 2015-17

'This excellent resource tackles some of the key issues facing teenagers today and not only challenges young people to stand up for themselves, but also to stand up for others through joining the Seriously Awkward campaign.'

Rev. Mark Montgomery, Associate Priest and former Diocesan Youth Officer for Chester

'Sexting, depression and unhealthy relationships; we are called to engage with often unaddressed struggles that our young people face. This resource enables youth workers to address the challenges they face in a practical, structured and Biblical way; allowing groups to journey through personal issues together.'

Esther Elliott, student team at KXC, and former UCCF Relay Worker

'WOW is all I can say! What a rich resource - though a very challenging one for churches to tackle. Congratulations to The Children's Society for producing such a practical resource to help young people engage with potentially seriously awkward adolescent issues, develop strategies for navigating them and take action to make a difference for others.'

Mary Hawes, National Children & Youth Adviser, the Church of England

'I definitely would use these sessions with young people. The comprehension of the information is brilliant.'

Poppy Winks, Methodist Youth Development Worker, Nidd Valley Methodist Circuit

'It's rare to find a resource that tackles the hot topics facing young people, based on the latest research. I love the way that it is coupled with the tools and reflective space that allow young people to understand how these issues relate to their faith.'

Ben Mizen, Youth and Children's Work Adviser, Diocese of Portsmouth



**The
Children's
Society**

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Names used in this resource have been changed to maintain anonymity. All photographs posed by models.