

Talk PANTS: Teaching Guidance

This guidance accompanies the NSPCC's Talk PANTS programme for primary schools and childcare settings across the UK. Aimed at children aged 3–11, the lessons introduce the concepts of bodily autonomy, consent, and help-seeking. Through teaching relevant, age-appropriate knowledge, understanding and skills, these lessons reinforce the NSPCC's commitment to helping children to:

- recognise private parts of the body and their rights over their own body
- understand the importance of consent and their right to say no
- build their confidence to speak out when upset or worried
- know how to get help, and the sources of help available to them, including Childline Kids.

Please read and consider this guidance before teaching the lessons.

Introduction

About the campaign

The Talk PANTS campaign helps both parents and schools to introduce important key messages about abuse in an age appropriate, child-friendly way. The Talk PANTS rules are:

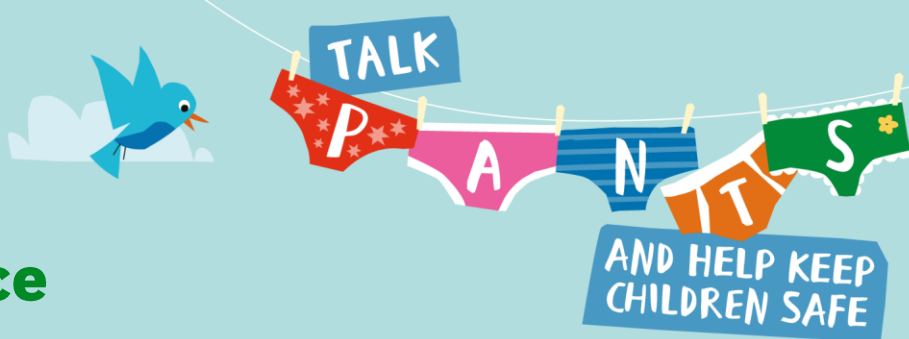
More details about the campaign, including guidance for parents, a film featuring our friendly dinosaur mascot Pantosaurus, and story book can be accessed here:

www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/support-for-parents/pants-underwear-rule.



NSPCC

EVERY CHILDHOOD IS WORTH FIGHTING FOR



Teaching guidance

Why this learning is needed

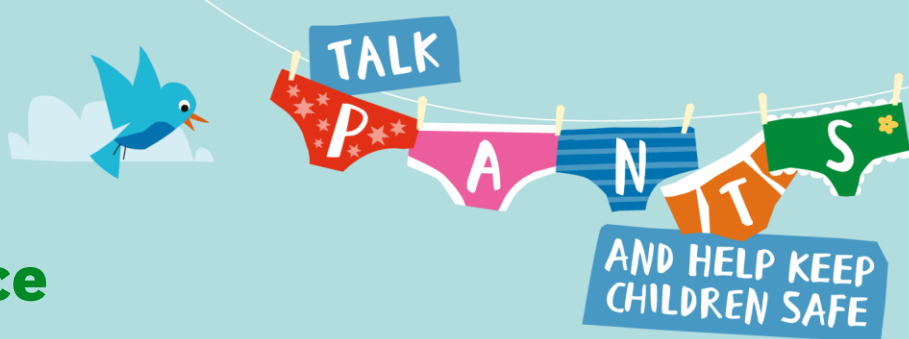
The Talk PANTS programme for schools has developed out of a robust research base which highlights just how essential this learning can be in safeguarding children. Estimates of prevalence of child sexual abuse vary, with girls more likely to be abused than boys (Singh et al, 2014, Hinds & Giardino, 2020). NSPCC research estimates that approximately 1 in 20 children in the UK have been sexually abused, with 90% of this abuse being by someone they know. Approximately one-third of child sexual abuse is committed by under 18's. Official figures are also likely to be significantly under reported as many children never disclose their abuse, or wait until they are adults to do so (Radford, 2011, McElvaney, 2015, Alaggia et al, 2019, Lemaigre et al, 2017, Brennan & McElvaney, 2020, Halvorsen et al, 2020).

All children who have experienced abuse face considerable barriers to disclosure, including feeling responsible for the abuse, fear of reprisals, feeling shame, fear of being blamed or judged negatively, fear of not being believed, fear of family disruption and concern for the perpetrator (Paine & Hansen, 2002, Munzer et al, 2016, Lemaigre, 2017, Brennan & McElvaney, 2020). However, this is compounded for younger children, boys, and those with disabilities, who are less likely to disclose their abuse (Lemaigre et al, 2017, Jones et al, 2017, Alaggia et al, 2019). One significant reason for this is that children may be unaware they are being exposed to something that is wrong and cannot understand and verbalise their experiences (McElvaney, 2019). These lessons are therefore designed to support children, in an age-appropriate way, to recognise abuse and other inappropriate behaviour, to develop relevant vocabulary, including in relation to consent, and to identify safe adults they could speak to.

About the Talk PANTS lessons

The accompanying programme of lessons has been designed to support schools and childcare settings to address the PANTS message in an age-appropriate and relevant way with children aged 3-11. The PANTS programme provides:

- activity suggestions for children aged 3-5, in pre-school or nursery settings. These provide opportunities for introducing the PANTS rules through both direct, teacher-led activities and more spontaneous indirect, child-initiated activities that may arise naturally in pre-school settings
- two lesson plans for children aged 5-7, helping them to recognise their rights over their own body and who can help keep them safe
- one lesson plan for children aged 7-9, and a final lesson for children aged 9-11, which help them to develop a deeper understanding of the PANTS rules, by exploring appropriate and inappropriate touch, including in their relationships with others. This gives schools an opportunity to address peer-on-peer abuse, where relevant.



Teaching guidance

- A specific lesson on the PANTS rules designed for children aged between 4 and 11 with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), specifically moderate learning difficulties, additional needs and/or autism. This lesson is designed to be used flexibly, to best meet the specific needs of children in your setting, and can be further adapted for use with children with severe learning needs.

Please note: We are using the term special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) to refer to children who have disabilities or additional learning needs. Other terms may be used in your region, nation or organisation, including: additional needs, additional support for learning (ASL), or additional learning needs (ALN).

The lessons have been written to meet the requirements for personal and social curricula in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and carry the PSHE Association Quality Mark. Please see the Appendix for curriculum references.

Before teaching the lessons

Preparation

Before teaching the lessons, read this guidance to make sure you feel confident with the lesson content and your own subject knowledge. You may wish to tell the wider school community when this teaching is going to happen, so that adults are aware, and the ethos of speaking out can be reinforced throughout the school. For example:

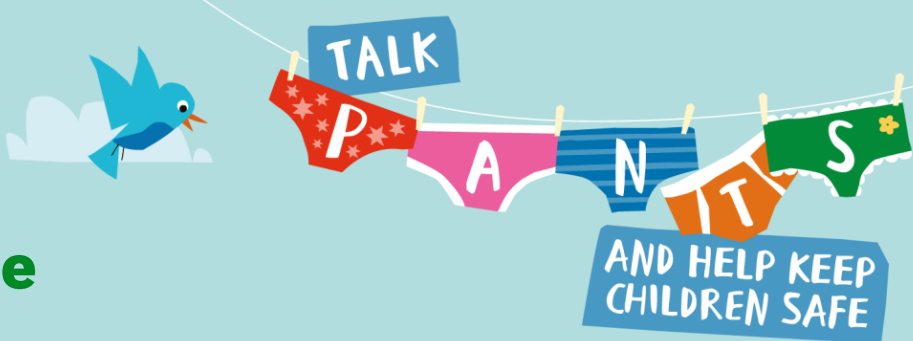
- Senior staff should let parents and carers know that the school will be teaching the PANTS rules – a template letter is provided in Appendix 1.
- You may want to provide leaflets for parents to help them consolidate the Talk PANTS lesson at home. Leaflets and posters can be downloaded from [here](#). Leaflets are available in different languages or for parents of children with special educational needs, including autism.

Safeguarding

Recognising signs of abuse

Most sexual abuse isn't reported, detected, or prosecuted. Recognising the signs that indicate a child might be suffering from abuse is challenging. Working out what's going on – especially if the child isn't ready to talk or is too young to communicate what's happening – can be very difficult.

All children are different, and the signs could appear in different ways. You may notice:



Teaching guidance

- changes in the child's behaviour
- changes to achievement and progress
- talking about sexual acts or using sexually explicit language
- sexual contact with other children or showing adult-like sexual behaviour or knowledge
- becoming withdrawn or clingy
- changes in personality
- becoming more insecure than previously observed
- using toys or objects in a sexual way
- changes in eating habits
- inexplicable fear of particular places or people
- regression to younger behaviours
- becoming secretive or reluctant to share things with you.

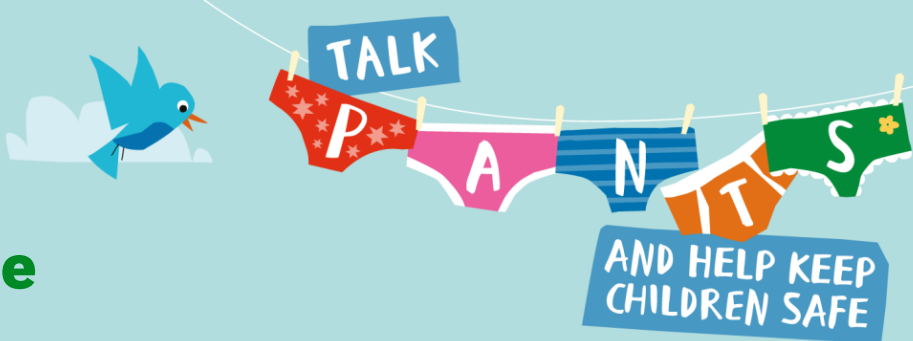
For more information and support, please refer to the Signs and Indicators resource from the Centre of expertise on child sexual abuse (CSA Centre): www.csacentre.org.uk/knowledge-in-practice/practice-improvement/signs-indicators-template.

Reporting concerns

In isolation, each of these might be part of a child's normal development. But if you see a child behaving in one of these ways, it may be a sign of something more serious. If, during the course of a lesson or other interaction, you become worried about a child's safety, you have a duty to report these concerns to the school's nominated child protection lead, and to follow child protection policies.

While the Talk PANTS teaching resources do not talk explicitly about abuse, the activities and topics covered might raise issues or provide opportunities for children to talk about concerns or worries they have. Points to remember when listening to and dealing with a disclosure include:

- stay calm; actively listen, and avoid looking shocked or disbelieving
- take what the child is saying seriously and reassure them they are doing the right thing
- do not promise to keep secrets, but tell them you will have to share this information
- explain to the child what will happen next
- be familiar with your child protection procedures and report to the nominated child protection lead as soon as possible
- do not ask leading questions



Teaching guidance

- record the information as quickly as possible; stick to facts, not opinions and sign and date everything you record
- get support for yourself from the nominated child protection lead or call NSPCC on 0808 800 5000.

If you're unsure of the procedures, speak to your child protection lead, social services or NSPCC. For further information please see the NSPCC's [Let children know you're listening resources](#).

If you think a child is in immediate danger, don't delay – call the police on 999, or call the NSPCC on 0808 800 5000, straightaway.

Keeping children with vulnerabilities in mind

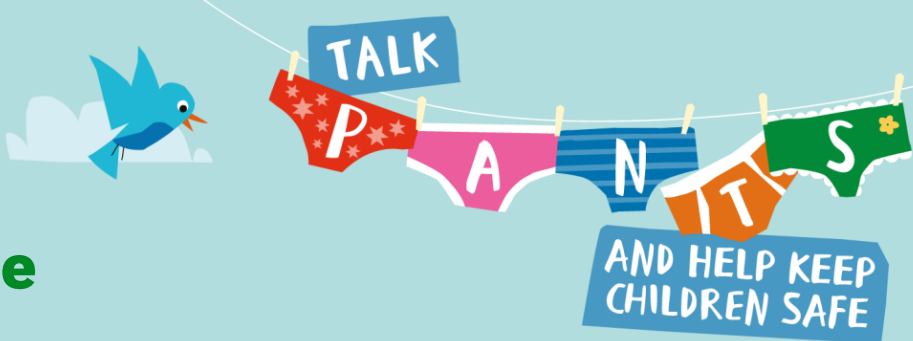
There may be some children who you are aware of having lived experience of abuse. In this case, think carefully about whether, and how, to include them in this learning. The lessons are designed to be safe for all children, including those who are personally affected; however the learning may be especially emotional or traumatic for these children. Consider using the following strategies:

- Ensure this topic has been shared with children and parents ahead of teaching.
- Speak with pastoral colleagues and seek guidance from the nominated child protection lead.
- If appropriate, you might have a conversation with the child and/or their parents/carers to decide if they want to be involved in the lesson.
- Provide an 'exit card' for a child who chooses to be in the lesson but who may need to leave if the lesson becomes too difficult for them – ensure they have been provided with alternative activities and a safe space to go.
- Assign a learning assistant to work one to one with the child and be alert to any signs of concern.

Protective interrupting

There may also be children in the class with lived experience of abuse that you are not aware of at the start of teaching. Despite every effort to make the classroom a safe learning environment (see section below), children may sometimes attempt to make a disclosure publicly, in front of their peers. This may be due to a number of reasons, for example the lesson content has triggered a memory, they feel safe and comfortable in school, they feel an immediate need to share what has happened to them.

However, disclosures in front of other children can be damaging, for example the child may regret speaking in front of others, other children may not respond sensitively either in the moment or in future, and you are unlikely to be able to give the child the required attention and support whilst still teaching the lesson.



Teaching guidance

If you suspect a child is making, or is about to make a disclosure of abuse, we recommend you use a technique known as 'Protective interrupting', where you intercept the child's disclosure, pause it for later, and ensure you return to them as soon as possible, for example using phrases such as:

- "It sounds like you're about to say something really important. I need to hear about that but can you wait until I can speak to you more privately?"
- "Can I pause you there? Let me come and talk to you once everyone has started working."
- "I really need to hear what you're saying and give it my full attention. Let me speak to you at the end of the lesson."

Ensure the child feels valued, knows that you intend to follow up with them as soon as possible, and that you follow your organisation's child protection policies when the disclosure is made.

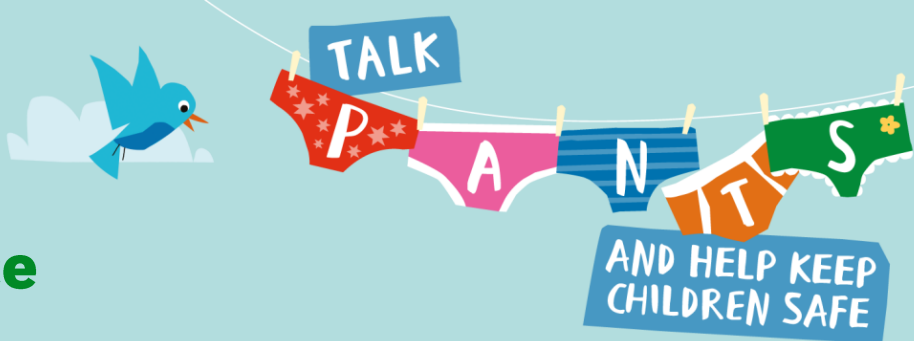
Ensuring a safe learning environment

Ground rules

Ground rules are an essential first element to making the learning environment feel safe for all children to participate in the learning and to have discussions about what might be considered sensitive topics. Clearly defined ground rules help to minimise unintended public disclosures or comments of a negative nature made towards other children; whether intended or not.

To be effective, teachers/practitioners and children should develop ground rules together and all agree to them. It can be difficult to develop ground rules with younger age groups in a way that is age-appropriate, so the following examples can be a good starting point:

- We will join in with the lesson, but we can 'pass' if we don't want to answer or talk about something
- We will listen to others and they will listen to us
- We will use vocabulary that we learn in our lessons
- If we don't know the words to use, we will ask our teacher
- We won't share stories about ourselves, our friends or our family
- We can ask our teacher lots of questions, but not personal questions about their life.



Teaching guidance

Distancing

The lessons use a range of distancing techniques such as stories, images, scenarios, and case studies of fictional characters. These are designed to stimulate discussion whilst ‘de-personalising’ the learning, rather than asking about children’s own behaviour or experiences, so they don’t feel put on the spot or judged for their own behaviour. It also reduces the likelihood of triggering children who have been personally affected by the issues, and discourages them from making public disclosures in front of their peers.

Handling questions

It is important that children are encouraged to ask questions in a safe space such as the classroom. But this requires you to feel confident to handle the questions raised, which can be concerning given the sensitive nature of the topic. Consider how you could apply the following suggestions:

- Have a question box available before, during and after all lessons, so children can add their questions at any time. They might choose to do this anonymously, or to add their name. It will allow children to ask questions if they are nervous to ask in front of their class, and will give you time to review the questions before responding.
- For children who may find writing their questions challenging (for example children with SEND) you may have other strategies in place, for example using traffic light cards to attract attention when they are in need of help or want to discuss something with the teacher. Alternatively, use the ‘I have a question’ resource cards at the back of this teacher guidance for children to attract your attention.
- If asked a tricky question in front of the group, be conscious of the message you give the rest of the children when responding. Ensure you thank the child for the question and check you have understood what they are asking. You might want to check what they think the answer is first. Then:
 - Give a factual, age-appropriate answer when you can.
 - If you don’t know the answer, it is okay to tell the child this, but reassure them that you will find out as soon as you can and get back to them.
 - You may just need to ‘buy some time’ or ‘park’ the question, by telling the child you will come back to them with an answer later in the lesson once you have thought about the response, or because you want to answer them individually rather than with the whole group.
 - Sometimes, a question might trigger a concern for you, in which case you may want to consult with a senior colleagues or nominated child protection lead.



Teaching guidance

Signposting support

Appropriate support must be signposted in all lessons, encouraging children to speak to safe, trusted adults, as identified in the Talk PANTS rules. For your school or setting, this may mean:

- Being familiar with the school or setting's safeguarding and child protection policies, as well as other relevant policies, such as the Relationships and Sex Education policy.
- Reassuring children that they will always be taken seriously, listened to and never judged, if they make a disclosure.
- Helping young children and those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) to develop the confidence and skills needed to ask for help, and to keep on asking if they feel they have not been heard or listened to.
- Making sure children know who their safe adults are, when and how they might speak to them, or what they might do, to get the help they need.

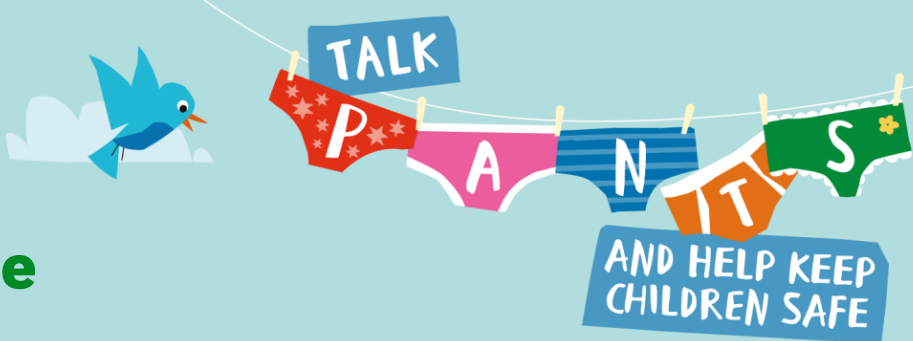
For young children, you may want to introduce Childline and let them know there is a phone number to call if they want to speak to a counsellor: 0800 1111. For children who are 9-11, you could also refer to the Childline kids website: www.childline.org.uk/kids.

Always check the appropriateness of a website for young people before directing them to it.

The preventative curriculum in schools

Ongoing NSPCC research demonstrates that child abuse, bullying and domestic violence have a pervasive and detrimental impact on children and young people. It is always adults' responsibility to protect children from abuse; from parents and carers, to medical professionals, to teachers. Schools have an important role to play in delivering a preventative curriculum - teaching children about their bodies, consent, how to recognise abuse, and that abuse is never their fault. The PSHE curriculum can provide a space for children and young people to develop the skills needed to confidently seek help. Schools can help children understand that abusive behaviour is never acceptable or right.

Abuse is still under-reported by children, and children encounter a range of barriers to seeking help; including being unaware that what has occurred is abuse, lacking the language to describe what has happened to them, or fears about not being listened to or believed by adults. The Talk PANTS teaching programme aims to help schools, teachers, practitioners and children to address some of these issues. This



Teaching guidance

supports the preventative curriculum and a school's legal obligation to safeguard and promote the welfare of its pupils.

Schools can support children through the taught curriculum and through their values, ethos and whole school approach, for example by:

- promoting the value of listening
- highlighting children's rights
- offering children opportunities to build self-esteem, confidence, and respectful relationships
- demonstrating that abuse in all its different forms is unacceptable
- working with outside providers to develop a broad range of curriculum enhancement activities
- offering appropriate support for children and staff dealing with abuse
- participating in high quality child protection training for children and staff
- responding to disclosures and child protection concerns quickly and efficiently.

Support for teachers

A note on terminology

When helping children understand which parts of the body are private, these lessons refer to the genitalia including the scientific names for male and female genitals. These terms include: penis, testicles, vagina and vulva and, together with terms such as nipples and bottom, are introduced alongside naming other parts of the body, such as hand, foot, leg and arm. The purpose of the activity is to help children distinguish which parts of the body are private, and to have the confidence and knowledge to accurately name parts of the body. This understanding is a key part of safeguarding children, and can support them to both recognise abuse and report incidents to safe adults.

When teaching about female genitalia, it is important to be clear on the difference between the vagina and the vulva — two terms that are often used interchangeably. The vagina is a muscular tube inside the body, whereas the vulva describes the whole female external genitalia. Therefore, children should learn that most of the vagina is inside the body, but that the opening can be seen from outside the body, within the vulva.

Working with children with SEND

This programme provides a specific lesson designed to support children with SEND, which draws on many of the activities and experiences in the mainstream lessons. The lesson is designed for children with moderate learning difficulties, additional learning needs and/or autism and is intended to be used flexibly, to best meet the needs and abilities of the children in your class. For children with more severe learning



Teaching guidance

needs, the content may be taken and further adapted to provide sensory experiences or interactions which best meet their needs.

The timings given are for guidance and can be adapted or extended as you see fit; for example you may choose to break the lesson up further by building in natural breaks and returning to the content over multiple sessions – however, the same order should still be followed. A list of resources is provided, but you know your class best and may wish to adapt these to meet individual needs. You may choose to use additional visual or symbolic images to support understanding, for example, Widget symbol-based language or Makaton signs, symbols and speech, to support written content. Some children might benefit from physical objects in place of pictures, and for others it may be more helpful to project a resource on a screen, rather than provide a paper copy. Please adapt and add to the given resources as necessary.

Makaton symbols for the Talk PANTS programme can be accessed here: www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/support-for-parents/pants-underwear-rule/pants-guides#makaton

You may find the activity suggestions for children in childcare settings (age 3-4) and early years foundation stage settings (age 4-5) can also be used for children with SEND.

Similarly, further differentiation and adaptation of the lesson may be required, depending on the specific needs of your class. For example, characters' names in scenarios may need to be changed to ensure they are not the same as names of children in the class. While in PSHE education, distancing the learning is important, some children with SEND may need a more personalised approach that draws on their own interactions and experiences to support their understanding. Additional ideas for reinforcing and embedding learning are provided at the end of the lesson plan, including opportunities to revisit core messages through the Pantosaurus song and storybook. Links to additional guidance for covering this content with autistic children and deaf children are also provided at the end of the lesson plan.

Further support to cover related learning for children with SEND is also provided in the NSPCC's Speak Out Stay Safe SEND/ASN/ALN programme: <https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/services/speak-out-stay-safe>.

Guidance for Early Years Foundation Stage settings

Within the safeguarding and welfare requirements of the EYFS framework, child protection is a key area:

Providers must be alert to any issues of concern in the child's life at home or elsewhere.

Para 3.4 EYFS statutory framework

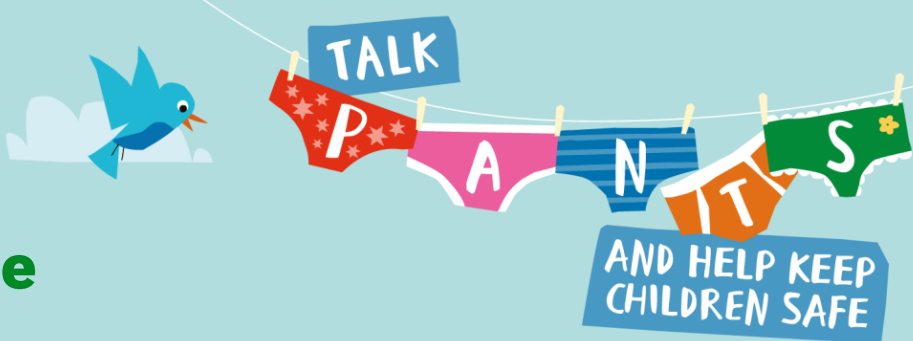


Teaching guidance

Ensure that safeguarding policies and procedures are in place, and that they reflect statutory relevant guidelines in the EYFS framework and child protection guidance for your nation. Ensure that all staff understand the policies and safeguarding procedures and have up-to-date training so they are able to recognise signs that children in their care may be at risk of abuse.

Decide how you will engage parents to support your choice to cover Talk PANTS with their children and how you are going to get approval to do so, if you feel this is necessary. This might be via a letter or email to parents (you could adapt the template in Appendix 1 for your setting), or you may wish to offer a parent session to discuss the messages and materials.

The Talk PANTS materials for EYFS do not require any naming of body parts, and simply refer to 'anything underneath your pants' and 'privates are private'. If children in your setting are familiar with using biological names for genitals, such as vulva, vagina, penis, or testicles, then continue to use these words. Seek advice from policies, lead practitioners or senior staff if necessary.



Teaching guidance

Appendices

Appendix 1: Template letter to parents/carers

Dear Parent/Carer

This term [XXX] class will be discussing the **NSPCC's Talk PANTS rules** in our PSHE lessons. During these discussions we will aim to teach our children the following important safety skills without giving explicit information or telling scary stories. These are the PANTS rules:

- **P: Privates are private.**
- **A: Always remember your body belongs to you.**
- **N: No means no.**
- **T: Talk about secrets that upset you.**
- **S: Speak up, someone can help.**

The lessons empower children, in an age-appropriate way, to recognise their rights to their own bodies, say no to touch that is unwanted, and tell someone if they feel uncomfortable. The lessons include activities which help children understand:

- **Appropriate and inappropriate touching**
- **Their right to say no to things that make them feel upset or uncomfortable**
- **The names for parts of the body**
- **Who to turn to if they ever feel upset or worried.**

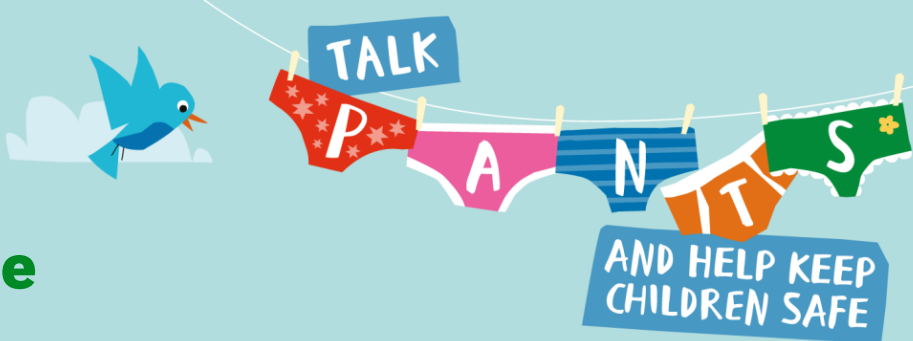
If you would like to know more about the NSPCC's campaign, including a short film and parent guide to help you continue the 'Talk PANTS' conversation at home, more information can be found at:

nspcc.org.uk/pants.

If you have any questions or concerns please don't hesitate to get in touch.

Yours sincerely
[PSHE lead]



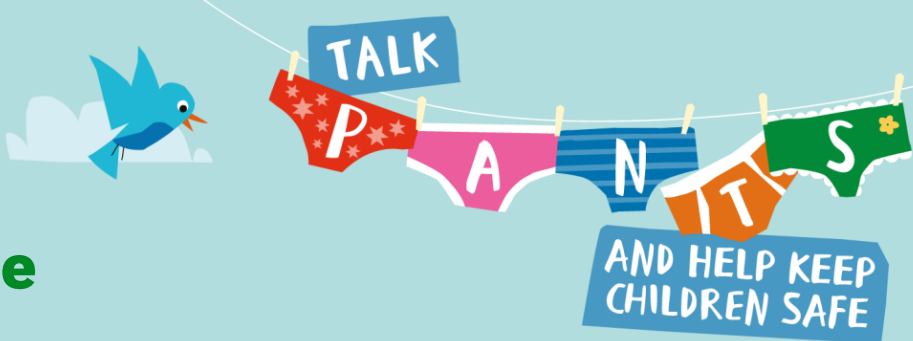


Teaching guidance

Appendix 2: Curriculum references

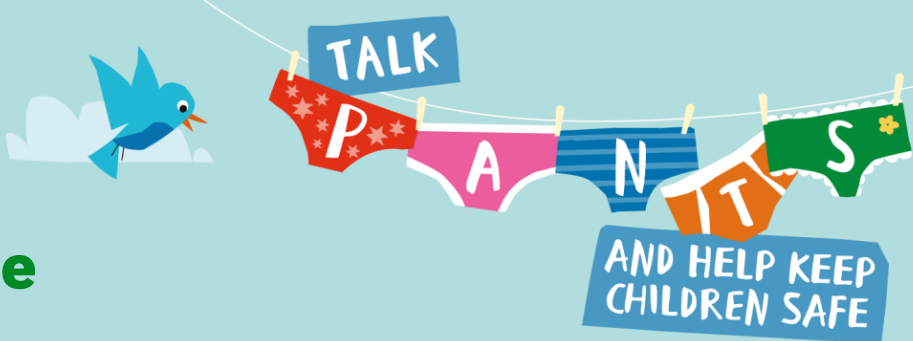
This table references the relevant curriculum links for these lessons in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. The series of lessons is not designed to be taught in isolation, but should always form part of a planned, developmental programme. Learning is best placed within a spiral programme of knowledge, skills and attribute development, where prior learning is revisited, reinforced and extended in age- and developmentally-appropriate contexts. Schools across the UK can also refer to the PSHE Association [Programme of Study](#) for further support in planning their curriculum. For those working with children with SEND/ALN/ASLN, the PSHE Association also has a [Planning Framework for Pupils with SEND](#).

England: Relationships and Health education	<p>Families and people who care for me:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> how to recognise if family relationships are making them feel unhappy or unsafe, and how to seek help or advice from others if needed <p>Caring friendships:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> how to recognise who to trust and who not to trust, how to judge when a friendship is making them feel unhappy or uncomfortable, managing conflict, how to manage these situations and how to seek help or advice from others, if needed. <p>Respectful relationships:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the importance of permission-seeking and giving in relationships with friends, peers and adults <p>Being Safe:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> that each person's body belongs to them, and the differences between appropriate and inappropriate or unsafe physical contact how to recognise and report feelings of being unsafe or feeling bad about any adult. how to ask for advice or help for themselves or others, and to keep trying until they are heard. how to report concerns or abuse, and the vocabulary and confidence needed to do so. where to get advice e.g. family, school and/or other sources.
---	--



Teaching guidance

Wales: Relationships and sexuality education	<p>Relationships and identity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An awareness of how to communicate wants and needs in relationships, and begin to respect those of others • How understanding and use of effective communication, decision-making, managing conflict and refusal skills are part of ensuring your own and others rights and part of friendships and relationships. <p>Sexual health and wellbeing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The use of accurate terminology for all body parts. <p>Empowerment, safety and respect:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognising the right to be free from harmful, abusive and bullying behaviour. • Understanding of the right for everyone to be free from harm or abuse • Ability to share with a trusted adult when faced with harmful behaviours. • How to seek support for oneself, and offer support to others. • An awareness of everyone's right to privacy, personal boundaries and which parts of the body are private • Understanding of the right to bodily privacy, personal boundaries including online • Ability to communicate if someone is touching them in a way that makes them feel uncomfortable • An awareness that everyone has the right to be safe and no one is allowed to harm anyone else.
Scotland: Health and wellbeing	<p>Social wellbeing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As I explore the rights to which I and others are entitled, I am able to exercise these rights appropriately and accept the responsibilities that go with them. I show respect for the rights of others <p>Mental and emotional wellbeing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I understand that there are people I can talk to and that there are a number of ways in which I can gain access to practical and emotional support to help me and others in a range of circumstances. <p>Relationships, sexual health and parenting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I understand positive things about friendships and relationships but when something worries or upsets me I know who I should talk to. • I know that there are people in our lives who care for and look after us and I am aware that people may be cared for by parents, carers or other adults • I am aware of the need to respect personal space and boundaries and can recognise and respond appropriately to verbal and non-verbal communication



Teaching guidance

Northern Ireland: Personal Development and Mutual Understanding

Feeling and emotions (FS)

- knowing what to do if they feel sad, lonely, afraid or angry and when it is important to tell others about their feelings, for example, when someone is making them anxious or unhappy they should talk to a safe adult

Keeping safe (FS)

- exploring appropriate personal safety strategies and identifying situations that are safe, and those where personal safety may be at risk, for example, knowing own name and address, knowing who to seek help from, knowing when to say 'yes' or 'no' to friends or adults, how accidents might be prevented at home, in school, on the farm or in the water

Health, growth and change (KS1):

- having respect for their bodies and those of others

Keeping safe (KS1):

- knowing what to do or from whom to seek help when feeling unsafe
- developing simple safety rules and strategies to protect themselves from potentially dangerous situations

Self awareness (KS2):

- examining and exploring their own and others' feelings and emotions
- knowing how to recognise, express and manage feelings in a positive and safe way

Keeping Safe (KS2)

- developing strategies to resist unwanted peer/sibling pressure and behaviour
- becoming aware of the potential danger of relationships with strangers or acquaintances, including good and bad touches
- knowing where, when and how to seek help

Relationships with family, friends and at school (KS2)

- exploring and examining the rules within their families, friendship groups and at school



Teaching guidance

Appendix 3: 'I have a question' cards:

I have a question ?	I have a question ?	I have a question ?
I have a question ?	I have a question ?	I have a question ?
I have a question ?	I have a question ?	I have a question ?