

Inter Alia Post-Show Resource

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Introduction

This pack has been designed to support parents, carers and teachers to explore the issues and themes raised in *Inter Alia* with young people.

The National Theatre has collaborated with specialist organisations the [Schools Consent Project](#) and [Tender](#) to create this resource and we will signpost other specialist organisations that may be useful in exploring some of the themes.

About the play – how drama can incite debate and effect change

Before becoming a playwright, Suzie Miller worked as a lawyer for 15 years. Her writing focuses on social justice issues and is influenced by her experience of working in the legal system.

In an [interview](#) for her old university in 2023, Miller said, '*The driving reason for me to write is to not just affect change, but actually just to interrogate the way that people think, so that we have a greater flexibility in the way that we think about things.*'

Her acclaimed 2019 play *Prima Facie* has brought about change in courtrooms and in lawyers' training, demonstrating the power of theatre to make us think and question and to effect change.

We hope that having watched *Inter Alia*, you will feel able and motivated to address some of the play's challenging themes with young people in your care and that the information in this pack will give you confidence to do so.

Having challenging conversations with young people

We know that, as parents, carers and teachers, you are doing the best you can to keep up to speed with a world that's changing very quickly, especially online. You may have already had conversations with your young people about topics such as consent and online safety, but it's difficult to know what to talk about if you're not fully aware of the dangers that exist for them.

Even though these challenges can seem overwhelming, there is a lot that parents and carers, schools, and specialist organisations can do to help. Alongside the PSHE and Relationships Education young people receive in school, you can equip young people with the tools they need to make positive choices and seek support when they need it. You can help to challenge harmful influences, attitudes and behaviours and help your young people think critically about what they are hearing from peers and external or online influences.

Young people often find it challenging to open up to their parents or carers, and many of us can relate to that feeling. It's important to create a comfortable space for them to talk. Show genuine curiosity by asking about their thoughts, feelings, friends and online interactions. Find out who they enjoy spending time with, watching or listening to, and what they appreciate about them. If they feel able to communicate with you about day-to-day things, they are more likely to open up to you about any concerns they might have.

The sections below will offer some talking points that will help you to start conversations around some of the topics raised in *Inter Alia*. We hope that, together, we can prevent the kinds of horrific situations depicted in the play from becoming a reality for more young people and their families.

Key themes

The play addresses a number of important themes. In each of the sections below, you will find information to help you and young people in your care to understand these themes and suggestions for ways in which you might explore them together.

Consent

It's really important to talk to young people about consent. Consent might appear complicated or confusing, but in reality it is straightforward. Sometimes consent can be complicated and it can be hard for a young person to understand what's okay and what's not.

It's helpful for them to understand what consent means both in legal terms and in terms of how it applies to their life and the choices they make.

Understanding consent in legal terms

[Section 74, Sexual Offences Act 2003](#): '...a person consents if he agrees by **choice**, and has the **freedom** and **capacity** to make that choice.'

There are three separate elements to consent: **choice**, **freedom** and **capacity**:

- Does a person have a **choice**, or is a decision being made for them?
- Is there violence or the threat of violence? If so, the law says you have no **freedom** to make that choice. Non-violent threats (eg reputational threats) do not remove your freedom as you can technically still walk away from the situation.
- **Capacity** is the ability to decide. There are a number of examples where the law says that there is no ability to decide whether to give consent, for example, if the person is asleep, unconscious, highly intoxicated, below the age of 13 subject to a mental disability of a certain degree.

In law, submitting to a sexual act is not the same as consenting to it.

The legal age of consent

- The legal age of consent in the UK is 16. This means that it is illegal to have sex with someone under 16. However, where both parties are close in age and consenting (eg two 15-year-olds) there is unlikely to be a prosecution.
- Sex with someone under 13 is automatically statutory rape under [Section 5 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003](#). The law states that anyone under the age of 13 lacks the *capacity* to consent (see legal definition of consent, above).
- Where one person is under 18 and the other person is in a position of trust and has a duty of care over the under-18-year-old, the age of consent rises to 18. For example: a doctor/patient, teacher/student relationship ([Section 16, Sexual Offences Act 2003](#)).

Talking to young people about consent

It can be helpful to explain consent in terms of aspects of everyday life. For example, you wouldn't assume that it was okay to take food from another person's plate without asking, so we shouldn't assume that it is okay to be physically affectionate without asking first.

You could use the following statements as conversation starters with young people. Ask them to justify why they agree or disagree with each of the statements below.

For each statement, we have provided a counter statement as an aid for you to use in your discussions :

<u>Statement</u>	<u>Counter statement</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If you don't say no, it means yes 	Lack of consent can be communicated through someone's body language and actions, and by using words other than 'no', eg by making excuses or sounding reluctant. Without more, a lack of the word 'no' should not be considered to be a 'yes'
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consent is given automatically if you are in a relationship 	In a relationship, consent must be obtained each time
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You can't withdraw your consent once given 	You can change your mind at any time – consent must be ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> S/he touched them first, so s/he clearly wanted it to happen 	Every action needs to be consented to – consent is mutual and specific

If your young person has seen the play, discuss the incident that takes place at the party and Harry's understanding of consent. If they have not seen the play, you might like to think about other examples from TV programmes, films or books that they can relate to when discussing consent.

Law vs morality

In the play, Jessica often refers to the idea of law and morality and the conflict between the two. As the action of the play unfolds, we see her viewing the action through these two different lenses.

Understanding law vs morality

- Fundamentally, the law is a set of rules created by our legislature with the intention of governing society. These laws are shaped by the prevailing morality of the day, which is why laws change and adapt over time. For example, it was once legal to rape within a marriage. Since a landmark case in 1991, that law has changed to reflect social attitudes: rape within a marriage is now just as much of a crime as rape outside of a marriage.
- Whilst the law is shaped by morality, morality is separate to the law. We can consider something to be immoral (eg cheating on our partner) without it being illegal.

Talking to young people about law and morality

Try to encourage your young person to think and talk about both the legal and moral aspects of any situation. What is illegal and what is immoral? Can something be illegal without being immoral and vice versa? You can use very simple examples from everyday life, like cheating in a game, underage drinking or parking on double yellow lines. You can also find contemporary news stories which highlight the tensions between the law and morality, for example assisted suicide or abortion, which might spark interesting debate.

Misogyny

What is misogyny?

Misogyny is a form of sexism that is defined by hatred of, contempt for, or prejudice against women or girls. It can involve objectifying, threatening, harassing, belittling, controlling, humiliating or abusing women. It can also involve discrimination, by viewing and treating women as less competent than men.

Understanding misogyny in contemporary society

Misogyny can be witnessed and disseminated both in-person and online, but in recent years there has been a significant increase in prolific online misogynistic influencers, who operate in a space referred to as 'The Manosphere'. This is a term for the online community dominated by misogynistic views that promote male supremacy, traditional gender roles and violence against women and girls. Young people are being fed this content just by scrolling through their social media feeds – research has shown that it takes less than three minutes for a new account, set up with a new email address and fresh smartphone, to be shown harmful content on social media – so it's easy to see how a flood of harmful content could begin to influence the thoughts and behaviours of young people. Misogynistic influencers also often speak to real anxieties felt by boys and men today, including financial instability, job insecurity, changing expectations of masculinity, difficulty in forming and maintaining relationships, mental health challenges and increasing male suicide rates.

Talking to young people about misogyny

If your young person is voicing opinions or demonstrating attitudes that worry you, it can be helpful to follow this strategy to discuss it with them:

Understand

Don't panic if your young person is voicing misogynistic views or opinions; it may be that they have heard them online or from a peer and are just repeating phrases without fully understanding them. Using this type of language does not mean your young person will develop harmful behaviour towards women, but the longer they are exposed to this content unchallenged, the more likely it is. It's important to understand what's appealing to them about these influences, so that you can gently challenge them.

Try sentence starters like *'I'd like to understand...because...'*

Explore

Make space to discuss why the attitudes they are demonstrating make you feel uneasy and keep asking questions even when the answers frustrate you. Getting angry or telling your young person that they are wrong won't change their mind. If you stay calm and listen to their views, they might be more willing to listen to yours.

Try sentence starters like: *'It makes me uncomfortable to hear that, but I'm open to hear about why you think it'*

Challenge

Having these conversations can be difficult, but by approaching your young person with curiosity rather than judgement, you can gently challenge harmful attitudes without causing them to feel attacked. Try gentle questions like, *'How do you think I/your girlfriend/sister/female-identifying friend would feel about that?'*

You can also try to reframe their attitudes with open questions. For example, in response to a statement like, **'Boys can't control being violent, it's who we are'**, you could respond with, *'If that's true, why don't boys hit everyone? Why aren't you hitting me right now? Clearly boys can control it; what makes the difference?'*

If your young person has experienced something that has frightened or worried them, you can give them the steps to challenge it. Show them how to block and report if it has taken place online, or explain how to document an incident and report it to an adult or the police if it has happened in school or on the streets.

More information on this can be found via the links provided at the end of this resource.

Online safety

Understanding the risks of online interactions

Young people are spending more and more of their lives online – an average of 4.8 hours per day – and are being exposed to a torrent of harmful content, just by scrolling through their social media feeds. A study of 3,024 young people in the UK from March 2025 revealed that 73 per cent of young people have seen content on their social media that promotes harmful attitudes toward women, and 50 per cent of young people see it at least once a week. But social media isn't the only place online where young people are receiving these harmful messages: with ten per cent of young people having seen pornography by age nine (which reaches 66 per cent by age 15), and a third of young people participating in online gaming, these are also large contributors. Gaming forums and voice chats are rampant with misogynistic comments and sexual harassment. Pornography is becoming more violent towards women and minority groups, and has led to the belief amongst many young people that sexual activity must involve physical aggression. Together, these three sources are considered by professionals to be the largest contributors to the rise of misogynistic and sexist attitudes in young people.

Because young people are being bombarded by these attitudes, it's becoming much more difficult for them to recognise 'right' and 'wrong' behaviour, especially when the content they are seeing online contradicts the values you as parents, carers, family members or teachers have tried to encourage.

Talking to young people about staying safe online

To broach this topic with your young people it can help to have a conversation about online safety alongside the list of questions below. You can ask your young person to look at the first video recommended to them on TikTok and run through the questions with them afterward. It doesn't need to be a video that is harmful – perhaps it's just a video of someone critiquing a video game or dancing in their kitchen. The purpose of the conversation is to help young people begin to be critical of what they are seeing online and ask questions about what specific

content is being targeted at them, so they are able to do it on their own when they view harmful content without your supervision.

Who created this message?

Is it an influencer acting individually, or are they being paid by someone with more influence?

Why is this message being sent?

Is someone trying to sell you something? Are they trying to gain power, money or subscribers? How does it benefit them?

How are you receiving the message?

Is it a general message like a TV advert, or a more specific one like a targeted ad or DM (direct message)? Were you already following this account, has someone paid to 'push' it to you, or has the social media algorithm 'decided' this is the kind of content you like?

How might others feel about this message?

Parts of it might appeal to your lifestyle or beliefs, but how would your family members feel about it? Your teacher? Someone from a different background, religion or gender?

What values, beliefs and demographics are represented in this message?

Who is the target audience for this message? Whose voices are missing? If there are voices missing, could the information be biased or untrue?

Where to find additional information and support

There are lots of brilliant charities and organisations who provide expert support and resources to help you explore challenging issues with young people, including Tender and the Schools Consent Project, who have contributed to this resource. Below you will find more information about them and a selection of links to other organisations and resources you may find helpful:

About Tender

Tender is an arts and education charity committed to preventing domestic abuse and sexual violence in the lives of children and young people by promoting healthy relationships. Founded in 2003, we work with schools, youth settings and communities to tackle attitudes which enable and condone inequality and violence, while providing a safe, age-appropriate and fun space for children and young people to explore their expectations of relationships.

Tender aims to:

- Educate children and young people about healthy and unhealthy relationships.
- Challenge attitudes which tolerate, condone and conceal abusive relationships.
- Empower children and young people to speak up and seek support if they or a friend is experiencing abuse.

For more information, see <https://tender.org.uk/>

About the Schools Consent Project

The Schools Consent Project sends lawyers into schools to teach 11–18-year-olds about consent and key sexual offences (including, increasingly, the impact of AI and the online world: deepfakes, sextortion, etc). The charity's founding principle is that education is prevention. By introducing consent literacy at school, young people are more likely to make informed, ethical decisions and less likely to experience or perpetrate sexual violence in later life.

To date, the Schools Consent Project has educated 72,000 young people about consent. Of those surveyed:

- 90% felt that their understanding of consent was really clear after a Schools Consent Project workshop;
- 90% felt more empowered to make a decision relating to sex and consent after our workshop;
- 92% felt that our workshops were 'quite or extremely important';
- 93% would recommend our workshops to others.

For more information, see www.schoolsconsentproject.com

Additional resources for parents, carers and adults in a position of responsibility

NSPCC – Relationships and Sex Education

[Relationships and sex education \(RSE\) resources for schools | NSPCC Learning](#)

Children's Commissioner for England – Pornography Advice Guide

[Growing up with pornography: advice for parents and schools | Children's Commissioner for England](#)

Children's Commissioner for England – Online Sexual Harassment Guide

<https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/news/the-things-i-wish-my-parents-had-known-young%20peoples-advice-on-talking-to-your-child-about-online-sexual-harassment/>

Lucy Faithful Foundation – Understanding Pornography

<https://www.lucyfaithfull.org.uk/advice/how-to-keep-children-safe/understanding-pornography/>

Young Minds – Social Media and Mental Health

<https://www.youngminds.org.uk/young-person/coping-with-life/social-media-and-mental-health>

Child Exploitation on Online Protection – “Ask the Awkward”

[#AskTheAwkward - help to talk with your children about online relationships](#)

UK Safer Internet Centre

<https://saferinternet.org.uk/guide-and-resource/parents-and-carers>

Support for young people:

We know that young people often feel uncomfortable talking to parents and carers about concerns. Whilst we hope that this pack will help you to develop open communication with your young people, we would also recommend letting them know about places they can go if they want to talk to someone anonymously.

Childline

A 24-hour service for anyone in the UK aged up to 19. Childline is completely anonymous, free and won't show up on a phone bill. Call 0800 1111 or webchat at www.childline.org.uk

Shout

A free text message service for people of any age who are struggling to cope. Text 'Shout' to 85258

The Mix

The UK's leading support service for under-25s to discuss any challenges. Available via their online community, on social media, through a free, confidential helpline or via a counselling service. Call 0808 808 4994 or visit www.themix.org.uk