



FROM THE DIANA AWARD

EXPLORING  
IDENTITY ONLINE  
AND COPING  
WITH ONLINE  
PRESSURE  
**EDUCATORS PACK**

FROM THE DIANA AWARD IN PARTNERSHIP WITH ASKEM

## INTRODUCTION

“I feel like people have to follow trends or fit in with groups on social media – they have to fit in with a category or group, with likes and dislikes.” - Focus group participant

### EDUCATORS PACK



The online world comes with endless opportunities, but it can also place a huge amount of pressure on young people at a time when they are exploring and developing their identity.

The Diana Award, in partnership with ASKfm and psychologist Dr Linda Papadopoulos, has explored how the online world is shaping young people's sense of self. Young people have described the pressures they face living their lives online: to fit in with others, look and behave a certain way, and be constantly connected in order to gain social currency in the form of likes, retweets, favourites and comments.

As a result, 63% of young people age 13-17 say they think people behave differently online to the way they do offline. Half of young people say they feel pressured to reply to people's messages quickly, and a quarter say they feel they have to 'like' things online that they don't actually like.

To help young people tackle this pressure to fit in online, The Diana Award has created this series of lessons designed to encourage students to reflect on their online and offline identities'

There are four lesson plans to choose from. The first can be delivered as a stand-alone session, as it gives an overview of the topic and explores how social media can have an impact on our sense of self. The following three lesson plans can be delivered as optional add-on sessions, delving further into issues such as conforming to societal expectations online, the difference between how we present ourselves online vs offline, and gender inequalities and expectations in an online environment.

### PREPARATION

As some of the issues discussed can be sensitive, it is important to set up a safe space agreement before starting the lesson.

Explain the following ground rules, ask if students have anything else to add and ask if everyone is happy to agree to follow these:

- Everyone should be open and honest
- Feel free to share personal stories but don't mention names
- The conversation stays in the room
- We will respect each other's opinions
- You have the right to pass if you don't want to answer a question

Finally, signpost where students can find support if they want any more information on the topics discussed. There is a list of suggested resources at the end of this pack.

# LESSON 1: CROWDSOURCING IDENTITY

"You feel pressured to look a certain way and to act a certain way. You feel pressured to look skinny and wear certain clothes. It shouldn't have to be like that."

- Student, 15

## PREPARATION

LESSON TIME 45MINS

You will need a whiteboard and pens.

Optional: A3 paper for students' brainstorm

Load The Diana Award video  
[www.tinyurl.com/identity-dr-linda](http://www.tinyurl.com/identity-dr-linda)



## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

To gain an understanding of the way that social media and the online world can have an impact on the way we develop our identities

To be able to describe the way our online identity can pressure young people to look, feel or behave a certain way as a result of our social media identities

To develop strategies to cope with online pressure and ensure social media doesn't have a negative impact on the way we feel about ourselves

## STARTER ACTIVITY

10MINS

### INTRODUCTION DISCUSSION

Group discussion about what 'identity' means

Collect ideas about all the things which contribute to how we develop our identity: relationships with family and friends, likes and dislikes, opinions, achievements, etc.

Discuss how people typically form their identities outside of the online world. For instance, they try different things out and gain feedback from the people closest to them.

Explain that in the online world, we are now holding our identities up to hundreds or even thousands of other people on social media to gain feedback. In this lesson we're going to explore the impact this can have.

### SLIDING SCALE

Ask the group to list on the board all the different types of things people post online, followed by listing the reasons why people tend to post online

Asks students to stand at one end of the room or the other depending on whether they agree or disagree with the following statements:

- I feel more able to be myself online
- There is a lot of judgement online
- I am able to say whatever I want and look however I want online
- People behave online in the same way that they do offline
- It is more important to me to be popular online than offline

Discuss how the desire to be liked by others online can affect the way you feel about yourself online in order to get more likes and followers.

What are the rules or expectations we face online? How many follow these rules and why do they follow them?

## MAIN ACTIVITY

10MINS

## SECONDARY ACTIVITY

10MINS

### COPING MECHANISMS

Write three words on the board: looks, behaviour, opinions.

Students work in small groups to brainstorm what types of pressure exist online for young people around these three things. (E.g. to look pretty, to post when you've done something fun or to always be connected, to post as if you're angry/upset about something you don't actually care about)

Ask groups to present their thoughts

- Do you think that there is a need to fit in with others online?
- Have you ever felt the need to look or behave a certain way to get more likes? Do you think that if you step outside of these expectations online you can face negativity or backlash?

## FOCUS AREA



### KEY QUESTIONS

Do you think that there is a need to fit in with others online?

Have you ever felt the need to look or behave a certain way to get more likes? Do you think that if you step outside of these expectations online you can face negativity or backlash?

## ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY

5MINS

### VIDEO

Play the Dr Linda video, pausing halfway through before the advice section [at minute 02:20]

Discuss what students think about the video, focusing on their thoughts around some of the young people's quotes (e.g. 'It's almost as if you can't be who you are. In an ideal world I'd be a person who would like anything without someone having an opinion on it. But you can't.')

## COPING MECHANISMS

5MINS

Group to design at least 5 coping mechanisms for how to explore who you are offline and resist the pressure that comes with the online world

Suggested answers:

- Make a list of things you like about yourself: positive qualities, strengths, hobbies, favourite features – remind yourself of these when you're feeling pressured to look or act a certain way online
- Take a break from the online world if it starts to make you feel bad
- Talk to someone you trust offline, such as a friend, family member or teacher, about how you're feeling
- Spend time doing things you enjoy offline
- Remember that you make the rules online! Unfollow or unfriend people who don't make you feel good, follow positive or inspirational people, and try to disengage from pressure to fit in online.

Play the rest of the video and ask students to add any additional strategies to their list.

# LESSON 2: CONFORMITY & SOCIAL EXPECTATIONS

"I feel like a lot of people don't feel comfortable being themselves because they feel like they'll be judged by other people. So if they do it on social media they can always have the fall back of "aww I was just following the trend."

- Student, 16

## PREPARATION

LESSON TIME 30MINS

Print copies of [Worksheet 1 & 2]

Put one copy of each in an envelope with worksheet 2 folded up tightly so that the picture on it can't be seen

School Camera/phone camera

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

To understand the way many people conform and follow social expectations online

To describe ways in which online conformity and social expectations can affect our personalities and behaviour

To develop strategies to make sure our online experiences are positive

## STARTER ACTIVITY

5MINS

### INTRODUCTION DISCUSSION

Group discussion on what 'conformity & social expectations' means.

Collect ideas and key words surrounding 'conformity & social expectations' and use to describe the impact that this can have on young people's development and how it can change personalities online and offline.

Explain how this lesson will look into the 'rules' young people follow online, why we conform to social expectations and how they can impact young people.

### MYSELFIE

This activity aims to encourage young people to question the rules they follow online and if this is a real representation of themselves.

Each student is provided with an envelope containing [worksheet 1] & [worksheet 2]. Students are to open the envelope and read the instructions, without opening the folded worksheet 2

The aim of the game is to take a photo matching the selfie, sealed within the folded worksheet

Students are provided with a series of instructions to follow in order to match the hidden selfie. They can recreate the image using anything they can find within the classroom.

Once they have completed all the instructions and think they have matched the images, they may open the worksheet and compare their selfie to the one in the picture

At this point we can use this as a basis for a discussion. Often we feel the need to follow a lot of online 'rules' for about how we present ourselves online in order to get more likes and followers.

What are the rules or expectations we face online? How many follow these rules and why do they follow them?

## MAIN ACTIVITY

10MINS

Materials:

Worksheet 1

Worksheet 2

Camera/Phone

## SECONDARY ACTIVITY

10MINS

Materials:

A3 Paper

Pens

### COPING MECHANISMS

Groups come up with at least 5 coping mechanisms for how to explore how to resist online conformity & social expectations.

If delivering this lesson as an add-on to Lesson 1, remind students of the coping mechanisms they came up with in the last class and add these to their list.

How will these coping mechanisms change their time online?

## FOCUS AREA



### KEY QUESTIONS

What rules do you follow online?

Do your photos represent your personality?

Do these rules impact your offline personality?

Would you follow these rules in your instructions if you would get more 'likes' or 'followers'?

What would happen if you uploaded a photo that didn't follow these online rules?

## PLENARY

5MINS

Ask the students if they have any questions they would like to ask. Remind them of the safe space agreement and that it's OK to ask any question they would like to.

Review the four main points below and tell the students that in the next session, they will be thinking about how their offline & online personalities differ.

- Online conformity and social expectations can cause young people to present themselves in a particular way online. Their social media may not be a true representation of their personality.
- Conformity and social expectation can also lead to young people feeling isolated and alone when they do not fit in or follow the 'rules' in an online space.
- Just because something is expected online does not mean that it is right. Often online environments have expectations that are wrong i.e. in online games it is expected that you will act in a particular way such as shouting and bad language.
- Just because others take part in an activity or behaviour does not mean that it is the right way to act or behave. Young people should be able to share their true personalities online without prejudice.

# LESSON 3: ONLINE & OFFLINE IDENTITIES

“ In real life I might be boring honestly, but when I’m on screen all the people that I chat with says I’m sassy and very funny and stuff. I feel more confident like, they’re not seeing me... some people feel more comfortable behind their screens.”

- Student, 16

## PREPARATION

LESSON TIME 30MINS

You will need a whiteboard and pen  
Print off copies of [Worksheet 3] double-sided  
Post-it notes

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

To identify the different ways in which we represent ourselves online and offline and why these might be different

To understand how to celebrate and develop the best parts of our online or offline identities

To develop strategies to make sure our online experiences are positive

## STARTER ACTIVITY

5MINS

### INTRODUCTION DISCUSSION

Explain that often we feel the need to present a certain online persona which might be different to how we actually are offline. These personas might follow specific trends, rules and guidelines to ensure they are appealing to our peers.

Collect key words and ideas surrounding online/offline personalities and use them to describe the ways in which our online/offline personalities differ.

Explain that this activity is designed to help young people think about which personality represents them best and which they should celebrate.

## MAIN ACTIVITY

10MINS

Materials:

Worksheet 3

Post-it notes

### POST-IT PERSONALITIES

Using [worksheet 3], students are to think about the key areas of their offline personality. Encourage students to think about things that make them stand out and how they enjoy different hobbies, music, sports, etc.

Place Post-It’s on the offline personality

- What hobbies do you have?
- What have you achieved?
- How do you like to dress/music/games/sports
- Do you follow trends?

Once everyone has completed their offline personalities, all young people are to turn over worksheet and place post-it’s on the online personality.

- What information do you share?
- Do you share all of the things you wrote on your offline personality?
- Do you show who you really are?

Once both sides are completed, the facilitator is to hand out blue-tac to each student, then ask all to stick up the personality they think best represents themselves.

Here it is expected most students will stick up their offline personality. It can be used as a basis to talk about the importance of celebrating difference and encouraging young people share differences online.

## SECONDARY ACTIVITY

10MINS

Materials:

A3 Paper

Pens

### COPING MECHANISMS

Groups come up with at least 5 coping mechanisms for how to explore how to best represent yourself online and celebrate differences.

If delivering this lesson as an add-on to Lesson 1, remind students of the coping mechanisms they came up with in the last class and add these to their list.

How will these coping mechanisms change their time online?

## FOCUS AREA



### KEY QUESTIONS

What is your online personality?

What is your offline personality?

Do you feel you can be yourself online?

Is the online personality real or is it fake?

Which of the two portrays you best?

Do you feel it’s more important to be popular online or offline?

## PLENARY

5MINS

Ask the students if they have any questions they would like to ask. Remind them of the safe space agreement and that it’s OK to ask any question they would like to.

Review the three main points below and tell the students that in the next session, they will be thinking about how we react online.

- Online personalities are not always a true reflection of a offline personality. With profiles on social media sites it is easy to pick and choose the information you want to show to others, often only showing the best parts.
- Because of social conformity and expectation, our offline personality is often far more interesting. We should look to share our differences and celebrate the little things that make us special.
- We should all be aware of how we can include people with different nterests, hobbies, etc online and ensure no one feels excluded or isolated.

# LESSON 4: GENDER DIFFERENCES & EXPECTATIONS ONLINE

“It’s almost as if you can’t be who you are. In an ideal world I’d be a person who would like anything without someone having an opinion on it. But you can’t.”

- Student, 15

## PREPARATION

LESSON TIME 30MINS

Print off copies of [\[worksheet 4\]](#). Enough for one per pair  
Print off copies of [\[worksheet 5\]](#).

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To identify the different ways in which they represent themselves online and offline and why these might be different
- To understand how to celebrate and develop the best parts of their online or offline identities
- To develop strategies to make sure their online experiences are positive

## STARTER ACTIVITY

5MINS

### INTRODUCTION

Provide students with [\[worksheet 4\]](#) which has the outline of two people. Within the two images, students are to write how they expect females and males to act online. Are their photos different? Do they behave differently? Do they use different apps?

Any identified differences can be related back to previous lessons including Lesson 2: Conformity & Social Expectations, and Lesson 3: Online and Offline Identities

Explain that these activities are to help support young people and to analyse the way males and females are often portrayed online. This will help young people question and identify any pressure that they feel to conform to gender expectations.

### Debate Game

Separate the class into small groups with a roughly even gender split

Hand out the playing cards, found on [\[worksheet 5\]](#) and ask the group to shuffle them up and place them in the middle of the table.

The groups then take it in turns to pick up a card. Those who pick up the card argue that it is correct, and those who didn’t pick up the card argue against it. The cards contain different statements such as ‘boys have to be macho online’, ‘girls only care about their appearance on social media’

The teams take it in turns to pick up the cards, until all have been used.

The aim of the activity is to encourage critical thinking and build debating skills.

Once all teams have finished debating, the facilitator can use the card to start a discussion on the topic.

## MAIN ACTIVITY

10MINS

## SECONDARY ACTIVITY

10MINS

Materials:  
A3 Paper  
Pens

### COPING MECHANISMS

Groups come up with at least 5 coping mechanisms for how to explore how to best represent yourself online and celebrate differences.

If delivering this lesson as an add-on to Lesson 1, remind students of the coping mechanisms they came up with in the last class and add these to their list.

How will these coping mechanisms change their time online?

## FOCUS AREA



### KEY QUESTIONS

Do males/females have different experiences online?

Why do we think that these differences exist?

Do you think males & females should be treated equally online?

How can we create a positive online environment for both males and females?

## PLENARY

5MINS

Ask the students if they have any questions they would like to ask. Remind them of the safe space agreement and that it’s OK to ask any question they would like to.

Review the three main points below.

- Online personalities are not always a true reflection of a offline personality. Often males and females are expected to act in a certain way, that is not a true representation of themselves.
- Because of social conformity and expectation, our offline personality is often far more interesting. We should look to share our differences and celebrate the little things that make us special.
- We should all be aware that we do not need to conform to gender stereotypes and that these typecasts are not always true.

**DO NOT LOOK!**

**(UNLESS YOU HAVE FOLLOWED ALL THE INSTRUCTIONS AND CREATED YOUR OWN SELFIE.)**

Inside here you will find a selfie.

The aim of the game is to copy the selfie as close as possible.

Without looking at the picture, follow the instructions found in the envelope to create your selfie. Use anything you can find in the room.

Once you think you have completed all the instructions, you can compare your selfie to the one inside.



**MY SELFIE\_\_**

Inside here you will find a selfie - but don't look at it yet!

The aim of the game is to match your selfie with the one inside (STILL DON'T LOOK!).

Follow the instructions found in the envelope to create your selfie. Use anything you can find in the room to help you create the selfie.

Once you think you have completed all the instructions, take your selfie!

Compare your selfie to the one inside.



**HOW WELL HAVE YOU MATCHED?**

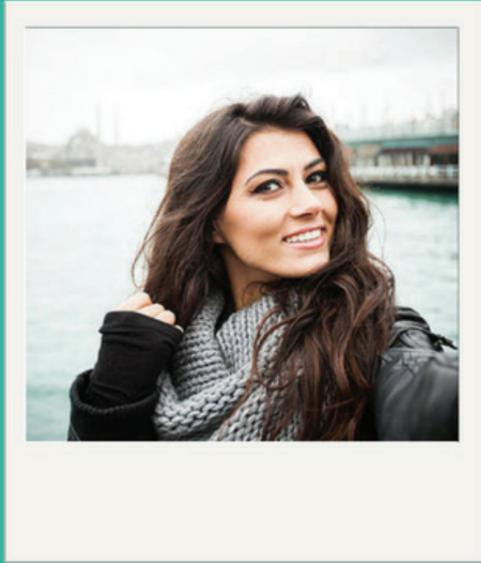
Often online there is a lot of 'rules' young people feel they need to follow in order to take a photo that will get 'likes' and take photos that others think are good.

Do you follow any rules when taking your selfies?  
What if you followed these rules?

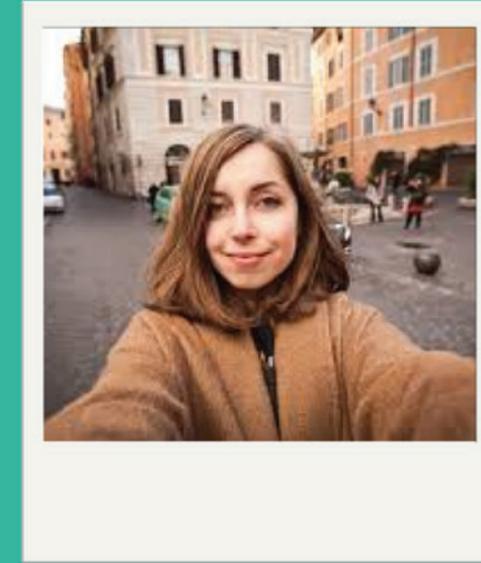
**DO NOT LOOK!**

**(UNLESS YOU HAVE FOLLOWED ALL THE INSTRUCTIONS AND CREATED YOUR OWN SELFIE.)**

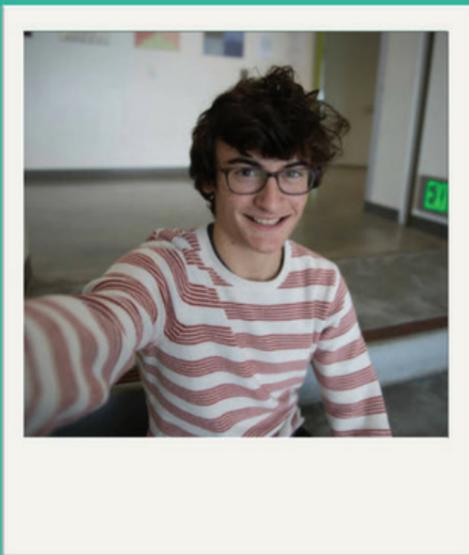
Once you think you have completed all the instructions, you can compare your selfie to the one inside.



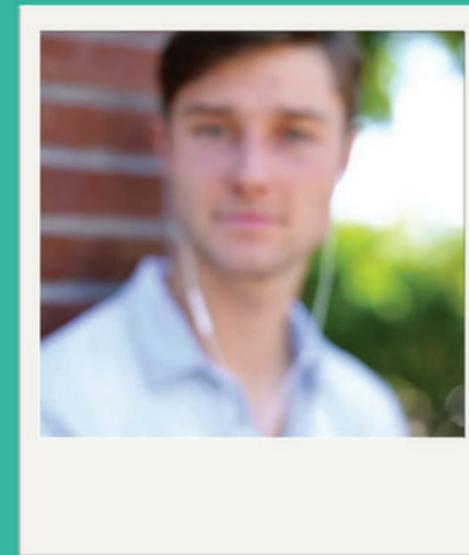
1. I am holding the phone in my left hand
2. My right hand is touching my hair
3. I am looking at the camera but facing left
4. I have long hair hanging over my shoulders
5. I am smiling showing my teeth



1. I am holding the phone with both hands
2. My right eye is slightly covered by my hair
3. I am looking at the camera with my head in the middle of the frame
4. I have long hair hanging down to my shoulders
5. I am smiling with my mouth closed



1. I am holding the phone in my right hand
2. My left hand is out of the frame
3. I am looking at the camera
4. I am wearing glasses and my hair is brushed to one side
5. I am smiling with a cheeky grin



1. My hands and top of my head are out of the shot
2. My head is in the middle of the photo
3. I have short hair and I'm wearing headphones
4. The photo is blurry
5. I have a straight face



ANTI-  
BULLY  
ING

FROM THE DIANA AWARD



**OFFLINE PERSONALITY**

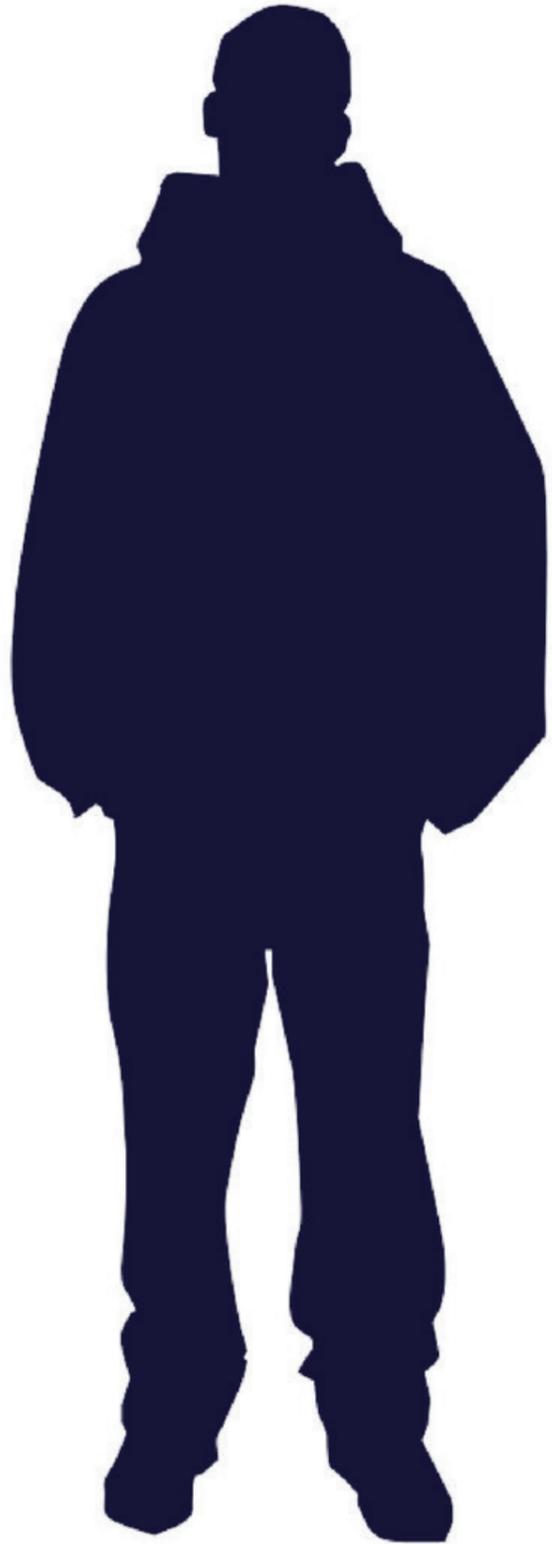


ANTI-  
BULLY  
ING

FROM THE DIANA AWARD



**ONLINE PERSONALITY**



## WORKSHEET FIVE\_

Boys have a thicker skin	Boys usually write mean comments	Girls are nicer to each other than boys	Boys typically have more friends online
Girls do not play online games	Boys bully others more than girls	Girls spend more time taking selfies	Boys take more selfies than girls
Boys use social media less than girls	Boys brag a lot more on social media	Girls are more worried about their looks than boys	Boys and girls use the same social media
Boys report people more than girls	Girls need likes more than boys	Boys and girls experience the same amount of cyberbullying	Girls block more people than boys

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## MORE INFORMATION

If you would like more information on anything you've discussed in the lesson today, have a look at the following charities, support groups and campaigns:



### The Diana Award Anti-Bullying Campaign

For advice on what to do if you're being bullied, visit our support centre:

[www.antibullyingpro.com/support-centre](http://www.antibullyingpro.com/support-centre)

### ASKfm support centre

For resources for young people, parents and teachers on online anonymity and anonymous cyberbullying, visit The Diana Award's microsite produced in partnership with ASKfm.

[askfm.antibullyingpro.com/](http://askfm.antibullyingpro.com/)

### Beat

The UK's leading charity supporting anyone affected by eating disorders or difficulties with food, weight and shape.

[www.b-eat.co.uk](http://www.b-eat.co.uk)

### Body Gossip

A campaign which explores people's experiences of body confidence

[www.bodygossip.org](http://www.bodygossip.org)

### Childline

ChildLine is a private and confidential service for children and young people up to the age of 19. You can email them, go to their website for a 1-2-1 chat online, or call for free on 0800 1111.

[www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)

### Mind

Leading provider of advice and support to empower anyone experiencing a mental health problem. Mind's website features excellent ideas for increasing your self-esteem.

[www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk)

### ABOUT THE DIANA AWARD\_

The Diana Award is a charity legacy to Diana, Princess of Wales' belief that young people have the power to change the world for the better.

Since 1999, over 45,000 young people have been recognised with a Diana Award for making an outstanding difference in their communities across the globe.



### THE DIANA AWARD

Awarding exceptional young people for selflessly creating and sustaining positive social change



### ANTI-BULLYING

Engaging young people to change the attitudes, behaviours and culture of bullying by building skills and confidence to address different situations, both online and offline.



### INSPIRE SERIES

Celebrate and empower Diana Award holders for making a positive impact in society.



### MENTORING

Building the resilience and character of young people by providing guidance in decision making, active citizenship, life and career skills.

## HOW TO GET INVOLVED

Please contact us to find out more  
[www.antibullyingpro.com](http://www.antibullyingpro.com)



[/thedianaaward](https://www.facebook.com/thedianaaward)



[@dianaaward](https://www.instagram.com/dianaaward)



[/dianaaward](https://twitter.com/dianaaward)



[/dianaaward](https://www.youtube.com/dianaaward)

Contact: The Diana Award

[antibullying@diana-award.org.uk](mailto:antibullying@diana-award.org.uk) | 020 3934 2160