

KEY STAGES 3 to 5

SUPPLEMENTARY SESSION: Gangs & youth violence

Teacher's plan

This plan can be delivered as a stand-alone session. It is designed to be used flexibly, therefore select stories and activities based on the needs and abilities of your group, and the length of your session as per the suggestions below. Activities and videos are included to extend learning around the Being ManKind stories, together with suggestions for questions to encourage an open discussion.

- 🕒 15-20 minute session – select one Being ManKind story and associated discussion to undertake e.g. during morning registration
- 🕒 60 minute session – select the Introduction (activity and development), Being ManKind stories and associated discussions, and extended discussion between the sessions
- 🕒 120 minute session – select the Introduction (activity and development), Being ManKind stories and associated discussions, extended discussion between the stories, final activity, and plenary

Age group – Key stages 3 to 5 (11-18 years)

- 🕒 The activities and discussions can be adapted to suit the age and learning style of your group
- 🕒 It may be beneficial to add initial and follow-up questions to those suggested, and use cooperative learning techniques such as Think-Pair-Share to improve engagement and participation.

Resources you will need

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| 🕒 Session guide for teachers/ leaders | 🕒 Projector/ whiteboard |
| 🕒 Presentation slides for each session | 🕒 Pen and spare paper |
| 🕒 PDFs of individual stories/ take-home sheet | 🕒 Flip chart & markers |
| 🕒 Additional videos/ audios | 🕒 |
| 🕒 Post-session feedback questionnaire for students (PDF/ Typeform link) - https://beingmankind.typeform.com/to/VDoF5L | |

Establish the aims and learning objectives

1. To build awareness of negative peer pressure and develop avoidance/ refusal skills
2. To explore the reasons why young people join gangs, and evaluate the consequences for all involved

Introduction – starter activity & development (approx. 20 mins)



Starter activity – Under pressure

Age group: mainly aimed at 11-14 years but can be adapted for older ages e.g. using more age-appropriate commands, or by employing a 'Truth or Dare' game format

Learning objective: to enable students to recognise the uncomfortable feeling of being under pressure

- 👤 Instruct the group to stand in a circle. Select one person to stand in the centre.
- 👤 Ask each student in the outer circle to take it in turns to think of a command that the person in the centre is asked to follow (see list below for examples)
- 👤 The person in the centre decides whether they want to follow the instruction. If they feel comfortable to do so, they must enact the request and remain in the centre to listen to the next command.
- 👤 If the person in the centre feels uncomfortable to follow an instruction, they say 'no' and swap places with the person who issued the command. They in turn issue the next instruction and the game restarts.
- 👤 The session leader should start the activity by suggesting the first three commands to set an example, and using instructions that most people would be willing to follow e.g. spin around 3 times. As the game develops, ask each person to think of a new and more demanding command.
- 👤 Repeat the steps above so that at least 3 students get a chance to be in the centre of the circle

If the group is unable to think of suggestions, use the following prompts:

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| 👤 Sing a verse | 👤 Put on your best French | 👤 Tell a joke |
| 👤 Show your best dance move | 👤 Tell an embarrassing story | 👤 Do 5 push-ups |
| 👤 Say 'red lorry, yellow lorry' 5 times | 👤 Do an impression of an animal | |

- 👤 At the end of the game, ask the group the following:
 - ⇒ Did you follow a command even though you felt uncomfortable? Why did you do it?
 - ⇒ Was it difficult to say no while standing in the centre? If so, why?

Summary - students should be able to recognise the uncomfortable feeling of being under pressure, and begin thinking about how they can resist peer pressure. The concept of peer pressure will be expanded further in 'Development' to identify reasons why we follow the crowd, and give students an opportunity to relate this to their own experiences.

Development:

Age group: this activity is mainly aimed at 11-14 years but can be adapted for ages 14-16 years by expanding the discussion around the 'Social conformity' video

Learning objective: to explore how our behaviour is affected by other people and evaluate reasons for this; to recognise different types of peer pressure



Play the video 'Social conformity (Brain games)'. Encourage students to share their reactions. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o8BkzvP19v4>

- ⇒ What are the main messages conveyed in the video?
- ⇒ Can you think of an example of when you have followed the crowd? Why did you do it?
- ⇒ Is it human nature to follow the crowd?



Lead a discussion to encourage students to think about peer pressure scenarios in their day-to-day lives using the following:

- ⇒ Have you ever heard these phrases?
 1. Everyone does it
 2. No one will know/ who's going to find out?
 3. You're chicken/ don't be a wuss!
 4. Go on, I dare you
- ⇒ Can you think of further examples of when you have been challenged to do something?
- ⇒ In pairs, construct a two-line definition of peer pressure. Think about whether peer pressure can also be positive.



Ask some students to share their definitions. Use their feedback to establish an initial whole class definition on the board/ flip-chart (this can be added to as the session develops).

- Peer pressure – social pressure by peers to take a certain action, adopt certain values, or otherwise conform in order to be accepted

Summary


Students should have a more in-depth understanding of peer pressure, and awareness of their own behaviours and actions.

In the next section, students will be encouraged to think about how they can refuse/ avoid negative peer pressure situations using a real-life case study.

Main 1 (Story 1): Being ManKind story and discussion (approx. 20 mins)

Age group: this activity is aimed at 11-18 years

Learning objective: to use a real-life story to explore negative peer pressure in a school setting

- 👤  **Listen to the audios** for the story, 'Know thyself' by Jhanai Lelitte, and use the suggested questions to encourage an open discussion
- 👤 Explain any difficult concepts/ words

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| Audio 1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ How did Jhanai avoid negative peer pressure? ⇒ In pairs, can you think of a time when you were the subject of negative peer pressure? How did you deal with the situation? ⇒ Can you suggest three other ways Jhanai could have managed his situation? <p><i>Secondary school is tricky because you just want to be accepted. I managed to get through it by learning how to play the game – how to be in with the crowd but not part of it, to get my work done while they messed about. It was a hard balance to find. They weren't really my friends as such, but there was a respect between us. I spoke to them, but we didn't hang out after school. I'm sure many of them are in prison now.</i></p> <p><i>Schools would hit other schools. Twenty of the strongest lads would go out to neutral ground to clash with those from another district, hyped up and full of adrenaline. I was a big guy, so I was encouraged to make up the numbers. I went along to one, but before we started I saw the police had already arrived. That didn't stop everyone else, but I was able to make up an excuse and slip away unnoticed. I tried to stay on the right side of the law. When I was a witness to someone being stabbed with a bottle, the police came to me for the story because I was the only one with no record. I was proud of that. It was never easy – I was under a lot of pressure to get involved. If I'd refused, I would have been ostracised by my peers and lost the respect I'd built up.</i></p> |
| Audio 2 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Do you agree with the way Jhanai dealt with the guy who started on him? ⇒ What would you have done? <p><i>It took some nerve to stay out of it, but I wasn't afraid to say no. I was strong-minded, I knew right from wrong. My dad reminded me that I wouldn't be with these people for the rest of my life, I didn't have to impress them. But you've still got to avoid being a target, and a good way is to deflect the attention elsewhere. Having other interests outside school meant that I was able to keep my own life to myself. I wasn't just sitting indoors waiting for a knock on the door to hang out every evening or waste my weekends.</i></p> <p><i>I wasn't perfect; I got a few detentions. But I was only ever given internal exclusions, where you were isolated from your mates and accompanied to the canteen by a teacher as though it was your last meal on death row. When I was a teenager I was living with just my mum, and there were certain things she couldn't understand, so I dealt with them on my own. On her birthday one year, I was one warning away from a full exclusion. A guy at school started on me, but I didn't retaliate. I didn't want to bring that sort of news back home as a present.</i></p> <p><i>The problem was, he thought he'd got one up on me. A few days later I fought him – it was important to show I couldn't be walked over. My mum never understood why, but that was the way to survive. In life you've got to walk with your chest out.</i></p> |

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| Audio 3 | <p>According to Jhanai, “some people think that men don’t have any emotions”.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Do you agree that men don’t experience the same emotions as women? ⇒ Are men more prone to violent behaviour and gang culture than women? ⇒ Is a female gang member more at risk than a male? <p><i>I worked hard at secondary school, but I lost focus on my studies in sixth form and didn’t do well in my exams. I’ll never forget the feeling of being unable to answer any of the questions, and I told myself I would never experience that again. I take full responsibility for getting bad marks, but it was impossible not to be influenced by my surroundings at the time.</i></p> <p><i>The school offered me the chance to retake the year, but I needed to make a fresh start away from the same people. Sometimes the most accessible options aren’t always best for you. Change can be good. I often thought about my mum and how she had made the decision to move from Brazil to the UK aged 17. I too felt that I needed to venture out and try something new. I started at a new college in Hammersmith, made new friends, and passed my exams.</i></p> <p><i>I try to be philosophical about life. When something ‘bad’ happens, I look for the reason – there’s a positive to be discovered in every situation if you’re prepared to change your perspective. When I have kids I’ll make sure I’m there for them, available to listen and give advice. Some people think that men don’t have any emotions, but we experience the same feelings as women. I do, and every other guy does. I think it’s important to channel these emotions into something constructive and not be afraid of how others may react.</i></p> |
| Audio 4 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Jhanai has good role models in his life. Without these positive influences, can you suggest how different his life might be now? ⇒ In pairs, discuss the positive role models in your life? What have you learned from them? <p><i>I always look to other people who are where I want to be and doing what I want to do, especially if they have a similar background to me. It gives me a better insight into how to get there. Members of my family are great role models, but if I just took my lead from them I’d feel I was narrowing my mind and options. A personality trait I admire in other people is persistence. It’s very easy to give up on something if it doesn’t work straight away and you experience setbacks. If you keep trying, things will eventually work out.</i></p> <p><i>My step-brother is going to be a dad soon, so I’ve been thinking about what lessons I’d like to pass on to my niece or nephew. I would tell them not to follow what everyone else is doing but to have their own mindset. It’s important to stay true to your own opinions and views. It’s important to know yourself.</i></p> |
| End of story discussion | <p>Display the quotation “It’s important to stay true to your own opinions and views. It’s important to know yourself”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ What do you understand by this statement? ⇒ Have you ever made a stand for something you believe in, even though others around you didn’t agree? What was the outcome? |

Summary

The suggested discussion points are aimed to encourage students to put themselves in others’ shoes, and explore thoughts and feelings. Students should start to think about refusal/ avoidance tactics against negative peer pressure, the concept of positive peer pressure through role models, and their own sense of identity.

This section completes their learning about peer pressure, and provides the foundation to understand how negative peer pressure can lead to joining a gang.

Extended discussion (10 minutes)

Wanna be in my gang?

Age group: this activity is mainly aimed at 11-14 years but can be adapted for ages 14-16 years

Learning objective: to introduce students to the concept of gangs and the 'appeal' of gang culture

👤 Pose the following questions, summarising students' responses on a flip-chart/ board.

⇒ What is a gang? Are all gangs violent?

- A group of people with a shared interest, or who share a common identity. A gang does not have to be involved in criminal activity

⇒ Can you think of any stereotypes of gang members?

⇒ Why do people join gangs? What is the appeal?

- To get protection from rival gangs
- To have power over others
- Friends or family are involved
- To make money
- Lack of anything else to do
- To get respect and recognition
- To belong to a group / family
- They can seem glamorous to some young people

⇒ Have you ever done something as part of a group, that you wouldn't have attempted alone?

Summary



This discussion encourages students to start thinking about reasons why people join gangs, and to consider their own susceptibility to being led into this life.

These factors will be explored further through the story 'Goodfella' by Daniel Barnes.

Main 2 (Story 2): Being ManKind story and discussion (approx. 15 mins)

Age group: this activity is aimed at 11-18 years

Learning objective: to use a real-life story to explore the reasons for joining a gang, and the consequences for all involved.

-  **Listen to the audios** for the story, ‘Goodfella’ by Daniel Barnes, and use the suggested questions to encourage an open discussion
-  Explain any difficult concepts/ words

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| Audio 1 | <p>⇒ Daniel suggests that rap music glorifies gang life. Do you agree? Can you think of any examples?</p> <p>⇒ Daniel believed that university or work wasn't for him. Where do you think this belief comes from?</p> <p>⇒ Can you identify with this feeling of having limited life choices? Is it possible to break free from this?</p> <p><i>As a young teenager growing up in South London, I found the attraction of gang culture very appealing. It seemed more like a family and, since I was being raised by my mother and an older sister, the absence of any positive male role models in my life had left a huge negative impact on me. So the gang became my source of belonging, and the gang elders took the place of our fathers.</i></p> <p><i>As the years went on, the gang way became my normality – from earning money through criminal activities, to days out at the theme park and heavy partying. The thought never occurred to me to change my way of life. Even after two years in prison at 16 years old, I just accepted my lifestyle and planned on being wiser and smarter in the future. I didn't think that university or work was for people like me. The rap music we listened to for hours on end glorified drug dealing, murder and criminality. After years of listening to that, you start believing in it and trying to live it out. On the face of it, rap music sells you a dream of fast cars and big houses, but in reality it delivers a nightmare of death, pain and misery.</i></p> |
| Audio 2 | <p>⇒ What was the turning point for Daniel to reassess his life?</p> <p>⇒ Why did it take Daniel to go abroad to rethink his situation?</p> <p><i>When I reached 20, the violence had increased to the point that being witness to a stabbing or a shooting was common. In the space of 14 months, three of my closest friends had been murdered by gun crime. But even this didn't make me reassess my life. I couldn't see any way of changing – I thought I would carry on until I was killed or locked up for life.</i></p> <p><i>As time went on, I realised that I had grown up too quickly and had witnessed things that most people hadn't at my age. My childhood and innocence had been robbed by the streets. Becoming consumed by the constant fear of my inevitable death or imprisonment, I travelled outside the UK to rethink how to live my life. I simply asked myself, do I want an early grave or a prison cell? The answer was no.</i></p> |

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| Audio 3 | <p>⇒ How do you think Daniel’s ex-gang members would have reacted to his decision to turn his life around?</p> <p>⇒ Do you think Daniel is a good role model? Why?</p> <p><i>The next step was to find good people who could help me to identify my skills and interests, which led me to discover that I had leadership potential. I decided to become my own boss and start my own business. After months of planning and research, I opened up a removals and storage company called All in All Removals. It was hard going in the beginning, but I was able to enjoy the simple fact that I was finding peace in my life. Fast forward three years and the company has gone from strength to strength, having a positive impact on active gang members who feel unable to turn their lives around.</i></p> <p><i>We can all strive to better ourselves; we all have the power to shape our futures for the better. I am my own man now, with no more reason to feel unsafe or at risk from anyone.</i></p> |
| End of story discussion | <p>Display the quotation:</p> <p>“We can all strive to better ourselves; we all have the power to shape our futures for the better”</p> <p>⇒ Do you agree with Daniel?</p> <p>⇒ Does everyone deserve a second chance?</p> <p>🗣️ Encourage students to explain their reasons</p> |

Summary

The suggested discussion points are aimed to encourage students to put themselves in others’ shoes, and explore thoughts and feelings. Through the story, students should have identified further reasons for joining a gang, and to consider the appeal and reality of gang life. The story also introduces the idea that we all have the power to change the course of our lives and shape our futures.

Daniel’s story suggests that rap music can glorify gang culture. This will be explored further through a team activity, where students will also be encouraged to think about how their actions/ behaviours can have a positive impact.

Main 3: Activity – for a longer session (approx. 40 mins)



It's a rap!

Age group: this activity is aimed at 11-18 years

Learning objective: to further explore the suggestion by Daniel Barnes in his story 'Goodfella', that rap music can glorify gang life; to identify and promote positive actions/ behaviours in young people; to work as a team in a creative task



Play a short clip of the music video, 'WAPS' by 67

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cPI7VNsN2K0>). Ask students to share their reactions, and the messages conveyed by the lyrics and visuals.



Play the full video 'Estate of the mind' by George the Poet

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E2ops6bHlw8>). Ask students to share their reactions, and compare and contrast the messages conveyed by the lyrics and visuals between the two videos.



Divide the students into groups and ask them to work through the following:

1. Think of 5 examples of positive actions/ behaviours you have observed in yourself or other young people
2. Use these examples to write a rap/ spoken word piece to promote positive actions/ behaviours of young people, highlighting issues that are important to you
3. Perform to the class as a group – everyone must have a role



Take feedback from the groups and invite the rest of the class to share their reactions and suggest other ideas. If time allows, ask students to make a video of their rap and upload it online to inspire others.

Summary

Through this activity, students should be aware of the influence that their words and actions can have, and feel empowered that individually and together, they have the power to make a positive difference.

Plenary (approx. 5 minutes) - by the end of the session students will have learned the following (keywords in **bold**):

1. To recognise negative and positive peer pressure in their day-to-day lives, and develop refusal/ avoidance tactics in response to negative peer pressure situations
2. To understand the 'appeal' and reality of gang culture, explore the reasons for joining a gang, and the consequences for all involved
3. To learn the importance of knowing your own mind, and realise the power you have to positively influence others and forge your own path

👤 Return to the notes on the board/ flip-chart

- ⇒ Can you add anything to the notes on gangs and violent behaviour based on the session today?
- ⇒ Who should you speak to if you, or someone you know, is being affected by the issues raised today?
- ⇒ What is the most important message from today's session?

Through the looking glass (self-reflection)

Learning objective – to apply what they have learned and encourage students to reflect on their own feelings, actions and behaviours

Ask students to take two minutes to reflect on their learning from the session, and think about the following:

- 👤 How can you influence someone through positive peer pressure?
- 👤 Which avoidance/ refusal tactics can you use in response to negative peer pressure?
- 👤 What could make you vulnerable to a gang?

For a longer session/ extension activity, invite the class to write a response to Jhanai/ Daniel, reminding them that their work will not be marked. They can relate:

- 👤 Their reaction to the story
- 👤 A different ending to the story
- 👤 Their own experience or of someone they know
- 👤 How the story has inspired them to think or act differently

Take feedback from the group if they are willing, and ask them to visit www.beingmankind.org to submit their responses online so we may feedback to each writer how their story is influencing young people.

Post-session feedback questionnaire for students (PDF/ Typeform link) -
<https://beingmankind.typeform.com/to/VDoF5L>

Further Being ManKind reading

- 👤 *Breaking the Habit* by Karl Lokko
- 👤 *Masquerade* by Mubarak Mohamud

Links to helpful organisations

- 👤 <https://www.gangline.com>
- 👤 <http://www.redthread.org.uk>
- 👤 <http://standagainstviolence.co.uk>