Educate Against ~~Hate~~



The Manosphere

An Educate Against Hate Explainer

HM Government

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Who is this explainer for?

This explainer is part of a suite of documents designed to help you understand and identify a range of issues affecting young people. It is complementary to our explainers on:

- Incels
- Algorithms

This explainer sets out what the manosphere online subculture is and the signs that a young person may be engaging with it. It will be useful for:

- secondary school teachers
- older students
- school leaders
- designated safeguarding persons
- all those working in education settings subject to the Prevent duty

This explainer will help to understand:

- what the manosphere is
- which terms and concepts are used across the manosphere subculture
- the potential harms of engaging with the manosphere, including suicide, self-harm, and violent extremism
- what to do if you are concerned a student or learner is engaging with the manosphere

Key Terms	Definitions
Misogyny	Feelings of hatred towards women and the belief that women are inferior to men.
Extreme misogyny	Feeling of hatred towards women that can lead to violence.
Algorithm	Algorithms are digital tools used by social media companies to analyse what people like and push more of those things to the people who interact with them.

Content warning

This explainer includes:

- references to content intended to incite violence and/or sexual violence, and content discussing and encouraging suicide and self-harm
- references to extreme content including violent misogyny, and other extremist ideologies

We would encourage you to seek support if you are affected by any of the content.

Section 15 of this document explains what to do if you have concerns about a young person.

A note about this document

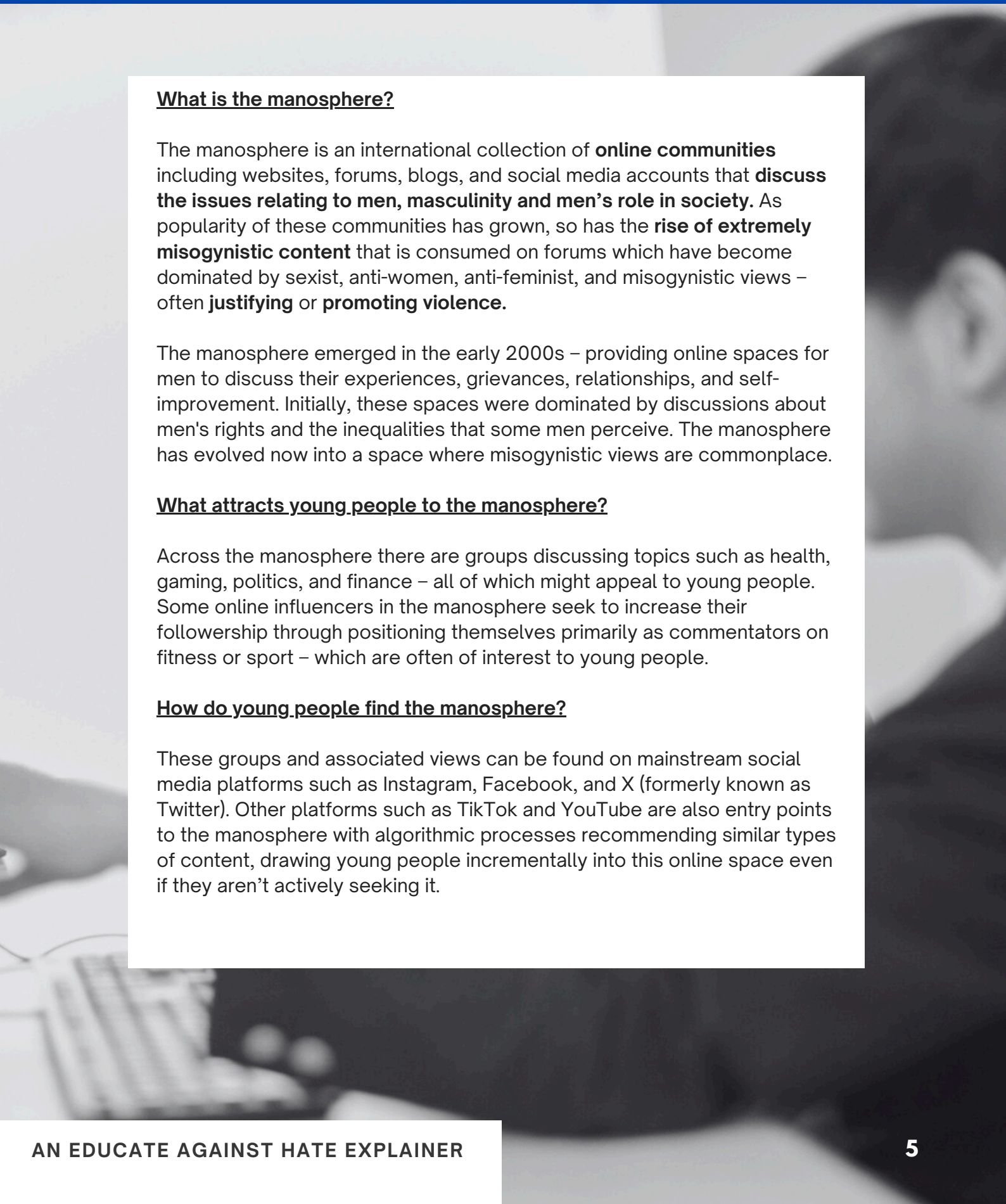
This explainer provides an overview of the manosphere online subculture and where additional concerns – including safeguarding, poor mental health, and Prevent – may arise.

The manosphere contains significant amounts of content that could be considered misogynistic. The manosphere primarily revolves around discussions of masculinity, men's rights, and issues that affect men, often from a perspective that is critical of feminism. What unites these different groups is a fundamental belief that women are inferior to men and ought to be subordinated to them.

Whilst some involved in the manosphere subculture may identify with extreme Incel ideologies, many young people that connect with the manosphere may have mental health issues, low self-esteem and subscribe to the view that they are inherently deficient in some way. Incels is self-directed harm, including suicidal ideation and actions. Some parts of the manosphere subculture appear to provide a supportive function, others can exacerbate negative feelings and thoughts towards the self and others.

The most common risk relating to Incels is self-directed harm, including suicidal ideation and actions.

The manosphere



What is the manosphere?

The manosphere is an international collection of **online communities** including websites, forums, blogs, and social media accounts that **discuss the issues relating to men, masculinity and men's role in society.** As popularity of these communities has grown, so has the **rise of extremely misogynistic content** that is consumed on forums which have become dominated by sexist, anti-women, anti-feminist, and misogynistic views – often **justifying** or **promoting violence.**

The manosphere emerged in the early 2000s – providing online spaces for men to discuss their experiences, grievances, relationships, and self-improvement. Initially, these spaces were dominated by discussions about men's rights and the inequalities that some men perceive. The manosphere has evolved now into a space where misogynistic views are commonplace.

What attracts young people to the manosphere?

Across the manosphere there are groups discussing topics such as health, gaming, politics, and finance – all of which might appeal to young people. Some online influencers in the manosphere seek to increase their followership through positioning themselves primarily as commentators on fitness or sport – which are often of interest to young people.

How do young people find the manosphere?

These groups and associated views can be found on mainstream social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and X (formerly known as Twitter). Other platforms such as TikTok and YouTube are also entry points to the manosphere with algorithmic processes recommending similar types of content, drawing young people incrementally into this online space even if they aren't actively seeking it.

Predominant groups within the manosphere

Manosphere groups	Key focus
Men Going Their Own Way (MGTOW)	A movement that advocates for men to avoid women altogether, choosing to abstain from relationships and sex.
Men's Right's Activists (MRA)	Men's rights activists promote a "perceived discrimination against men in society". The MRA community often downplays or outright dismisses women's issues, blaming feminism for what they perceive as men's decline in power and status.
Pick Up Artists (PUA)	This community is based around teachings on how to manipulate or coerce women into having sex with men.
Involuntary Celibates (Incel)	Incels are men who feel they are unable to attract sexual or romantic partners despite wanting relationships, and they attribute this to factors beyond their control, such as their appearance or societal norms.

Key links between the manosphere and Incel ideology

The manosphere can provide a gateway for some young men to adopt increasingly extreme views, especially when they feel alienated or rejected. Not all members of the manosphere are Incels, but it's important to note that **Incel ideology is a radical offshoot** of the broader manosphere. The **"Red Pill"** philosophy (common in the manosphere) often leads to the **"Black Pill"** fatalism of Incel communities.

A poor sense of self and negative perception of others, can make young people more susceptible to identifying with Incel and other extreme ideologies.

The following table shows the connections and slight differences between manosphere and Incel ideology:

Links	Manosphere	Incel Ideology	Connection
Gender Roles	Promotes traditional or hyper-masculine roles	Believes modern gender roles disadvantage unattractive men	Actively reject feminist perspectives
Misogyny	Varies by group, but often present	Central to the ideology	Shared hatred toward women
Victimhood Narrative	Men are victims of societal/feminist systems	Incels are victims of sexual selection and society	Share a grievance-based worldview
Online Communities	Reddit, forums, YouTube, blogs	4chan, Incel forums, Reddit (e.g., r/Braincels, now banned)	Platforms and users often overlap
Pseudoscience	"Red Pill" theories, evolutionary psychology	"Black Pill" fatalism, looks-based determinism	Shared use of un-scientific psychology to justify beliefs

Why is this relevant to schools, colleges and training providers?

- The manosphere can create unrealistic expectations of young men about relationships, sex, women, etc., which can lead to low self-esteem, mental health problems and in some cases, suicidal ideation.

- Some content within the manosphere shares common ground with Incel ideology and is extremely misogynistic in the promotion of an anti-feminist agenda.

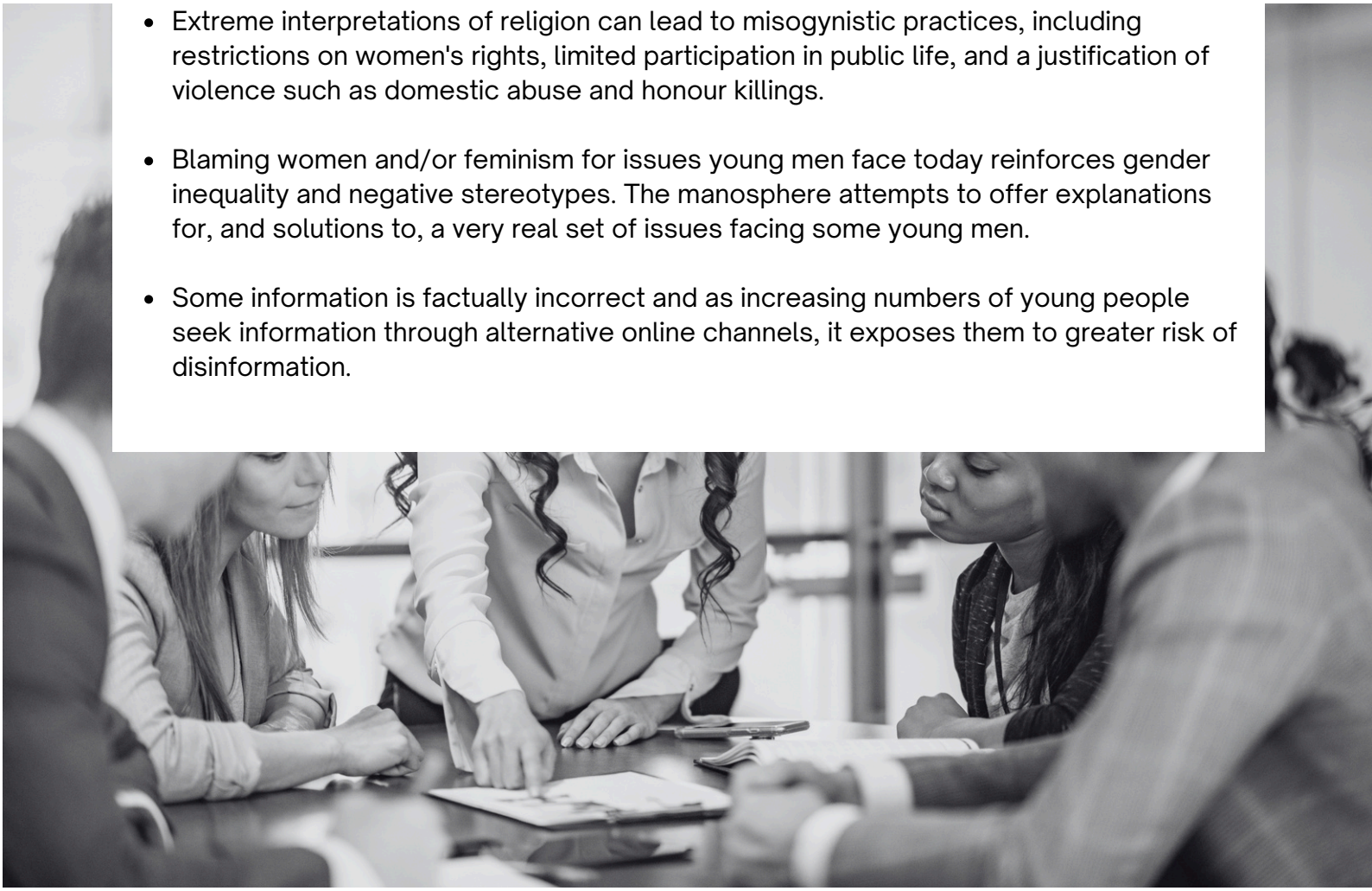
- As young men become further immersed in the online subculture, they may become increasingly isolated, potentially exacerbating these issues. While the manosphere presents as a supportive online community for young men, parts of the manosphere can encourage and incite violence, self-harm and suicide, and there have been acts of violence linked to manosphere content and the online community.

- Manosphere communities often overlap with those of the far-right, for instance condoning the view that there is a racial hierarchy and that feminism has had a negative impact on Western society.

- Extreme interpretations of religion can lead to misogynistic practices, including restrictions on women's rights, limited participation in public life, and a justification of violence such as domestic abuse and honour killings.

- Blaming women and/or feminism for issues young men face today reinforces gender inequality and negative stereotypes. The manosphere attempts to offer explanations for, and solutions to, a very real set of issues facing some young men.

- Some information is factually incorrect and as increasing numbers of young people seek information through alternative online channels, it exposes them to greater risk of disinformation.



What changes in behaviour should I look out for?

Language and attitude

- Use of manosphere jargon: terms like alpha/beta male, red pill, simp, hypergamy, SMV (sexual market value), femoid, Chad or Stacey
- Increased cynicism or hostility toward female teachers and peers: generalisations about women being manipulative, shallow, or only interested in money/status
- Adoption of rigid gender roles: belief that men should be dominant and women should submissive.

Online behaviour

- Frequent visits to certain forums or influencers: sites like Reddit's r/TheRedPill, certain 4chan boards, or YouTube channels promoting 'men's self-improvement' with a misogynistic slant
- Deliberate or inadvertent engagement with algorithm-driven content: watching one or two videos on male self-help or dating advice can lead to a stream of manosphere content via recommendation algorithms.

Social and emotional

- Isolation or withdrawal: spending more time online, especially in echo chambers, and less time with friends or family
- Increased frustration or anger: particularly around dating, relationships, or perceived societal injustices against men
- Victim mentality: belief that society is biased against men or that feminism has gone 'too far'.

Changed role models

- Admiration and idealisation of influencers or figures associated within the manosphere who promote extremely misogynistic views: idolisation of toxic influencers and content creators who are often cited in manosphere circles
- Disdain for mainstream figures: rejection of public figures who promote gender equality or progressive values.

Reactions to criticism

- Dismissal of opposing views: labelling critics as 'blue-pilled', 'NPCs' (non-playable character), or 'feminists'
- Echo chamber reinforcement: Preferring spaces where their views are validated and opposing views are mocked or attacked.

Manosphere terms

Term	Meaning
Alpha/beta male	High/low status men
Black pill	A deterministic view that men lack control in a world hostile to their needs in which women have an advantage as a result of feminism.
Briffault's Law	A concept stating that women do not engage with men unless they see an immediate benefit
Chad	A highly attractive, confident man who is successful with women
Debt-Free Virgins	The ideal of a woman who is free from financial debt and has a limited relationship history
False Allegations Fear	The concern that a woman may make false allegations against a man and ruin his reputation
Femoid	a derogatory term for women who think in simple terms about reproduction with specific types of men
Gamer	Describes a man who is considered to be highly skilled in seduction
Hypergamy	The practice of seeking a partner of higher, social, economic, or educational status
MeToo Backlash	The manosphere's belief that the MeToo movement unfairly targets men
NPC (non-playable character)	Originally a gaming term for characters controlled by the game rather than the human player, it's used to suggest someone lacks independent thought, following trends or opinions

Manosphere terms

Term	Meaning
Red pill/Blue pill	Taken from a moment in the film The Matrix: • Red – refers to awakening to a new, often controversial worldview • Blue – implies staying with mainstream or accepted beliefs
Peacocking	The technique of dressing flamboyantly to attract attention
SMV (Sexual Market Value)	An individual's perceived desirability as a romantic or sexual partner, based on traits like physical attractiveness, status, personality, and resources
Simp	A person who is overly submissive or attentive to someone they're attracted to, often at the expense of their own dignity or self-respect
Stacey	A woman who is attractive, socially confident and sexually active, often seen as unattainable
The wall	A term used in the manosphere for the age at which women become less attractive
White knight	A male who attempts to gain the favour of or engage in sexual relations with women by treating them as innocent, and delicate, and in constant need of protection, defence, and social support

How do I talk to young people about the manosphere?

Talking to a young person who may be influenced by the manosphere, requires a thoughtful, empathetic, approach. Here are some practical tips to help you shape the conversation:

Be curious, not confrontational

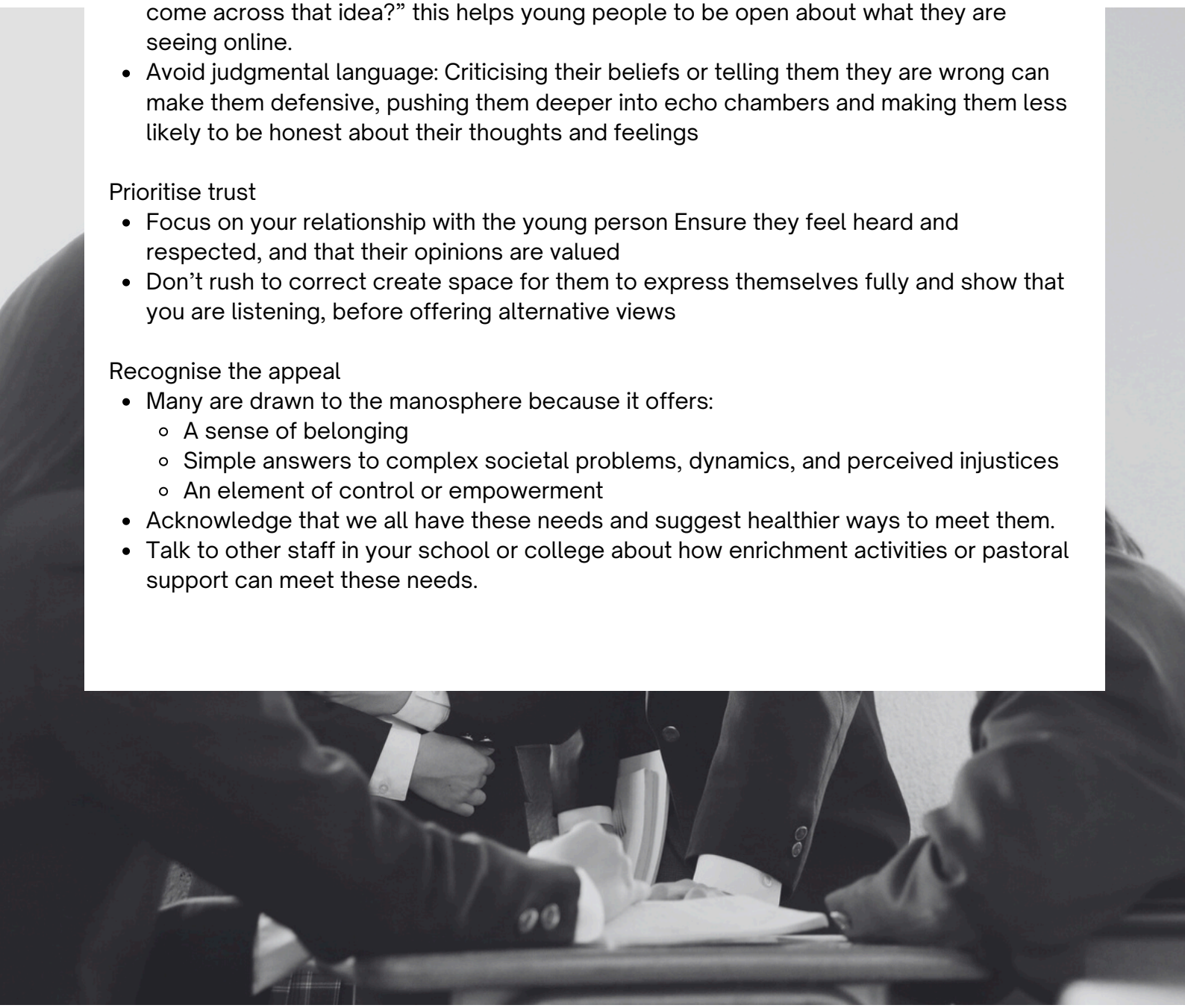
- Ask open-ended questions like: “What do you like about that content?” or “How did you come across that idea?” this helps young people to be open about what they are seeing online.
- Avoid judgmental language: Criticising their beliefs or telling them they are wrong can make them defensive, pushing them deeper into echo chambers and making them less likely to be honest about their thoughts and feelings

Prioritise trust

- Focus on your relationship with the young person Ensure they feel heard and respected, and that their opinions are valued
- Don’t rush to correct create space for them to express themselves fully and show that you are listening, before offering alternative views

Recognise the appeal

- Many are drawn to the manosphere because it offers:
  - A sense of belonging
  - Simple answers to complex societal problems, dynamics, and perceived injustices
  - An element of control or empowerment
- Acknowledge that we all have these needs and suggest healthier ways to meet them.
- Talk to other staff in your school or college about how enrichment activities or pastoral support can meet these needs.



Encourage critical thinking

- Ask questions like:
  - “Who benefits from this message?”
  - “Do you think this applies to everyone?”
  - “What would you say if someone said that about your sister/mum/friend?”
- This approach helps young people to understand the flaws in the information they may be encountering
- Analyse examples of this kind of content with young people and help them to identify manipulative tactics like incorrect use of data or emotional hyperbolic language, and the seeding of disinformation with easily acceptable facts and truths

Offer positive alternatives

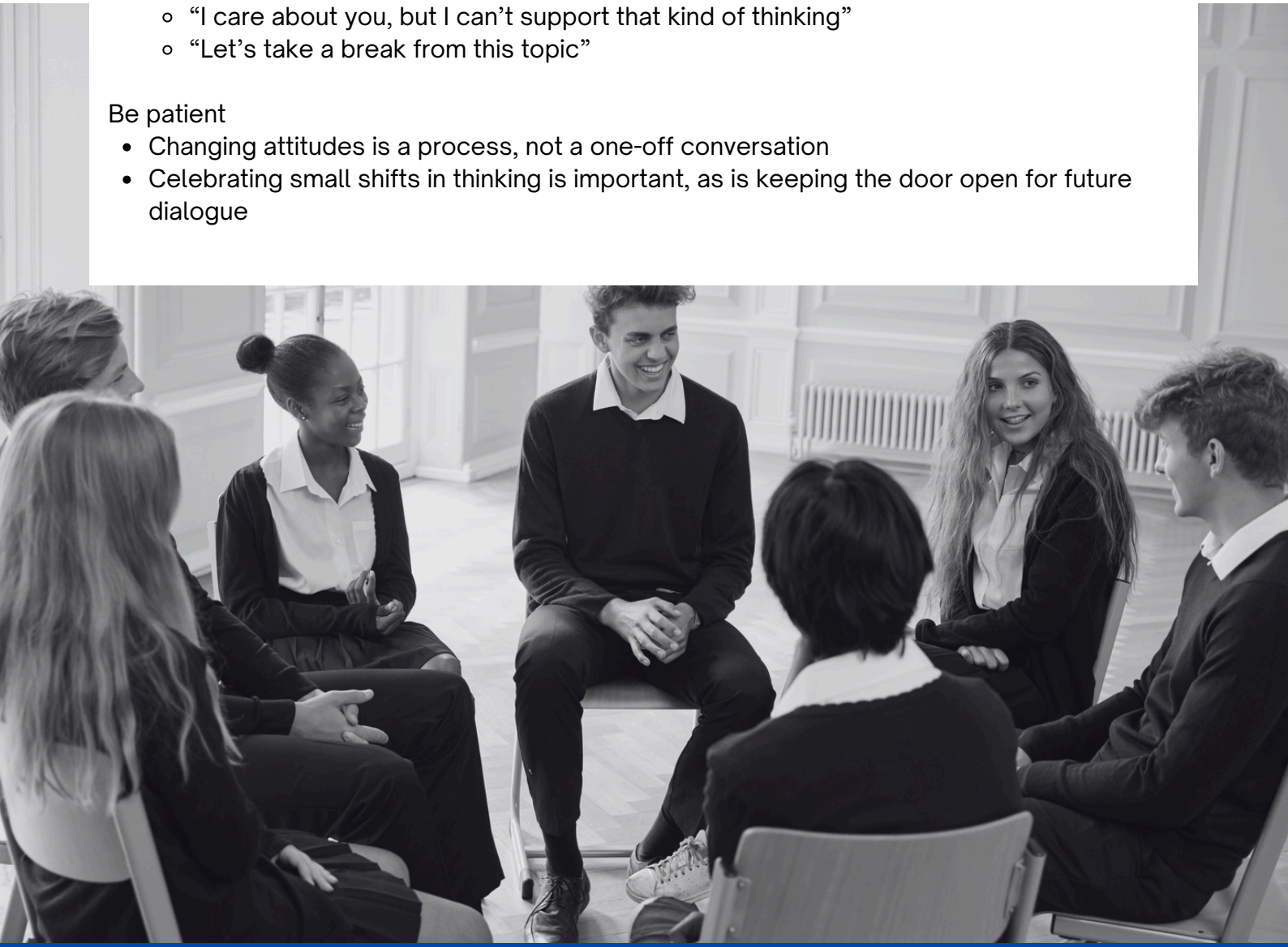
- Introduce them to healthy male role models who promote emotional intelligence, respect, and growth.
- Suggest alternative content creators or communities that focus on self-improvement without misogyny

Set boundaries when needed

- If the conversation becomes upsetting or harmful, it’s okay to say:
  - “I care about you, but I can’t support that kind of thinking”
  - “Let’s take a break from this topic”

Be patient

- Changing attitudes is a process, not a one-off conversation
- Celebrating small shifts in thinking is important, as is keeping the door open for future dialogue



Building resilience to the manosphere

Relationships and sexuality education (RSE) is a mandatory element of the Curriculum for Wales.

This mandatory RSE Code supports schools to design their curriculum. The content is set within the context of broad and interlinked learning strands, namely:

- relationships and identity
- sexual health and well-being
- empowerment, safety and respect

This should incorporate the exploration of social influences and align with the mandatory requirements of the What Matters Code within the Curriculum for Wales. This includes, but is not limited to:

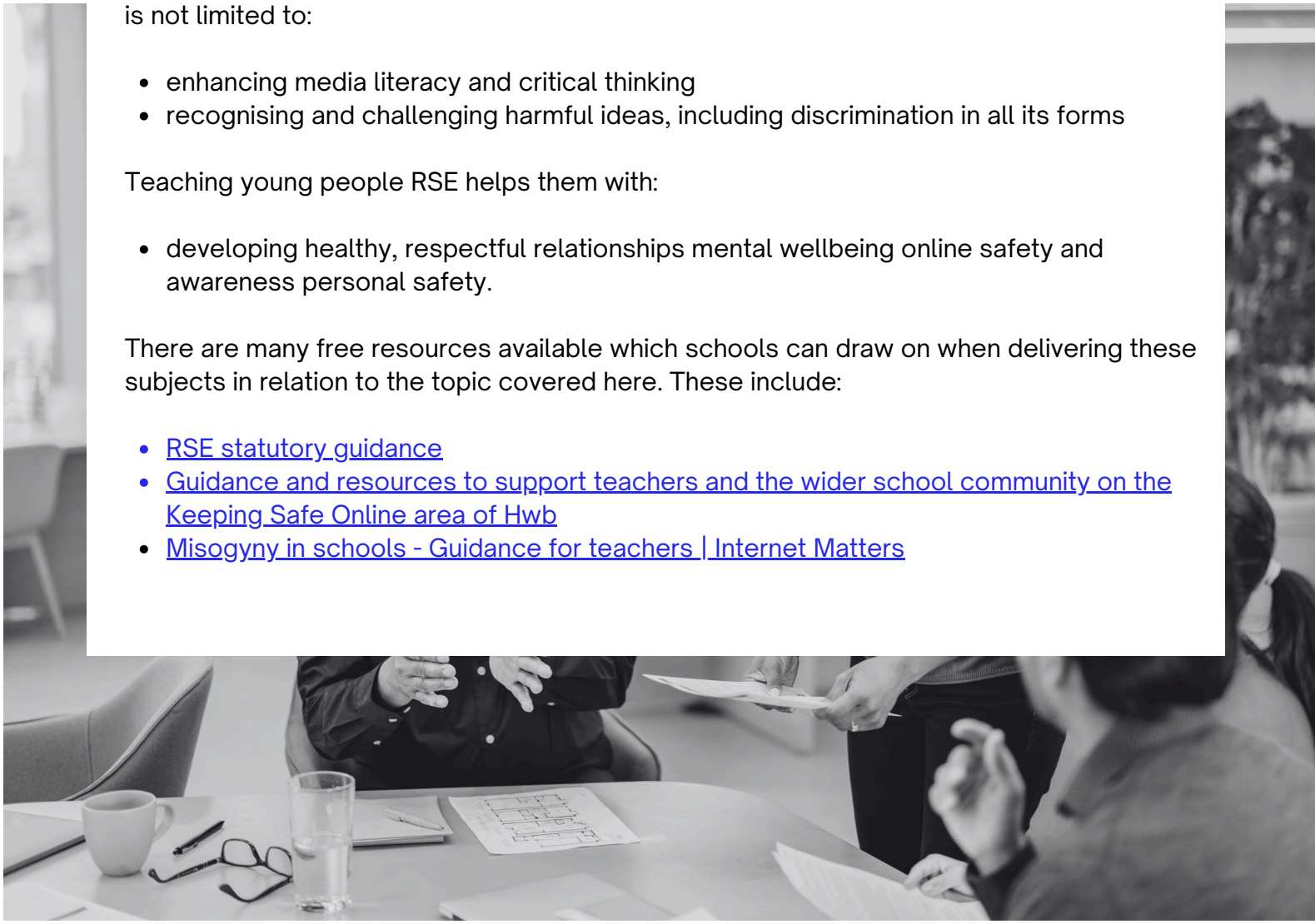
- enhancing media literacy and critical thinking
- recognising and challenging harmful ideas, including discrimination in all its forms

Teaching young people RSE helps them with:

- developing healthy, respectful relationships mental wellbeing online safety and awareness personal safety.

There are many free resources available which schools can draw on when delivering these subjects in relation to the topic covered here. These include:

- RSE statutory guidance
- Guidance and resources to support teachers and the wider school community on the Keeping Safe Online area of Hwb
- Misogyny in schools - Guidance for teachers | Internet Matters



What to do if you have concerns

What to do if you have immediate concerns for safety

If you think someone is in immediate danger, or if you see or hear something that may be terrorist-related, trust your instincts and call 999 or the confidential Anti-terrorist Hotline on 0800 789 321

What to do if you have concerns over radicalisation

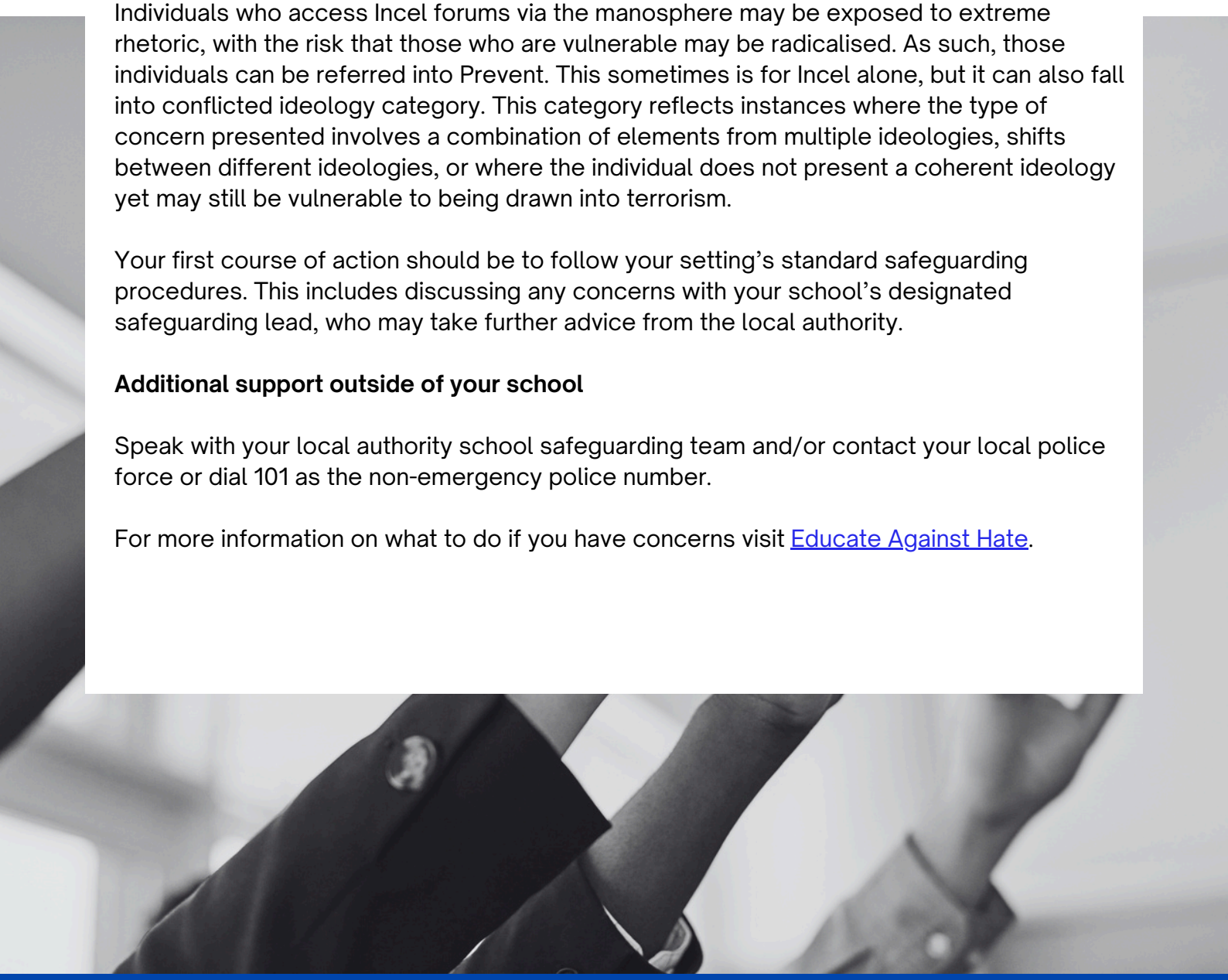
Individuals who access Incel forums via the manosphere may be exposed to extreme rhetoric, with the risk that those who are vulnerable may be radicalised. As such, those individuals can be referred into Prevent. This sometimes is for Incel alone, but it can also fall into conflicted ideology category. This category reflects instances where the type of concern presented involves a combination of elements from multiple ideologies, shifts between different ideologies, or where the individual does not present a coherent ideology yet may still be vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism.

Your first course of action should be to follow your setting's standard safeguarding procedures. This includes discussing any concerns with your school's designated safeguarding lead, who may take further advice from the local authority.

Additional support outside of your school

Speak with your local authority school safeguarding team and/or contact your local police force or dial 101 as the non-emergency police number.

For more information on what to do if you have concerns visit Educate Against Hate.



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