

Introduction to the themes of Respect and Fear

This resource aims to address the confusion many young people experience about fear and respect. Relationships based on these notions have very different impacts – fear is damaging and disempowering, while respect empowers and builds many positive qualities in young people as individuals as well as in their relationships with others.

The confusion exists when adults or young people try to gain respect through attitudes and behaviours that promote fear. For example, aggressively asserting authority or power over someone can be used to gain respect when, in reality, this so-called 'respect' is based on feelings of fear of consequences.

True Respect comes from relationships based on fairness, where the views, feelings and rights of both parties are valued.

When using this resource it is crucial to appreciate that respect and fear can be confusing for young people:

- Fear and respect both have a powerful influence on the behaviour and development of children and young people
- Both can give a person a sense of power/status/authority
- Being respected or feared can give you influence over others
- Different Behaviour which promotes respect or fear can be role-modelled by the same adult
- Someone who is feared or respected can be an attractive role-model for children or young people

Demanding 'respect' through attitudes and actions, which in reality promote fear, can be seen as an effective way of forcing people to comply with rules or to behave differently. However this can have damaging consequences for young people's relationships as well as their own development.

By working with a real sense of respect, adults can promote healthy values in young people and a sense of responsibility for behaviour that has lasting and positive impacts on attitudes, feelings, behaviour and relationships.