

Somerset Youth and Community Service

Child protection for young people



Aims :Young people increase their knowledge about what child protection is.

Learning Outcomes:

By the end of the session the participants will:

- understand what child abuse is
- know where to go to get help
- help increase other young people's awareness

Group size: 6 - 8

Time: 1 hour

Venue: Youth club

Materials:

- Blank coasters
- Pens
- Information sheet

Time	What	Who	With
5 mins	Sit down with a group of young people and discuss what you are going to be talking about. Express to the young people that this is not the time to share personal information but the workers will be there after the session if anyone wants to talk on a one to one basis.	Worker	
10 mins	Ask the young people to identifying the differences between types of abuse. Note them on the flip chart.	group	Flip chart
5 mins	What does the word grooming mean? Explore this with young people and note on the flip chart.	all	Flip cart
10 mins	How to keep yourself safe? Discuss ideas with young people and note on the flip chart.	all	Flip chart
10 mins	Explain that if young people disclose anything about child protection it has to be reported. Ask them how you can ensure all the youth club members know this.	Youth worker	
15 mins	Give the young people blank coasters and ask them to create designs which can be used in the youth club. They should help other club members to understand: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• what Child Protection is• who they can speak to if they're worried• anything they disclose will have to be reported - most things are confidential but not this! Show them the sample coaster designs if they are note sure what to do. Give out copies of the hand-out with information about where young people can get help and support.	Young people	Pens Blank coasters, sample designs Hand out
5 mins	Get the young people to share their work and run a quick check to ensure everyone is OK. Ensure a worker is available afterwards in case anyone wants to chat,	worker	Hand-out of useful numbers

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Sample coaster designs



Information Sheet

Definition of abuse

Child abuse is any action by another person – adult or child – that causes significant harm to a child. It can be physical, sexual or emotional, but can just as often be about a lack of love, care and attention. We know that neglect, whatever form it takes, can be just as damaging to a child as physical abuse.

An abused child will often experience more than one type of abuse, as well as other difficulties in their lives. It often happens over a period of time, rather than being a one-off event. And it can increasingly happen online.

It is estimated that over half a million children are abused in the UK each year (NSPCC).

Main types of abuse:

- Sexual abuse – intercourse, masturbation, oral sex, fondling, flashing, showing pornographic images, inappropriate touching.
- Grooming – befriending, gaining trust of young person and / or family in order with the intention to commit and offence.
- Physical abuse – hurting or injuring a child, giving them alcohol or drugs.
- Neglect – adults failing to meet a child's basic needs (food, warm clothing, failing to provide medical attention, leaving them 'home alone' inappropriately), exposing them to risk of injury.
- Emotional – emotional ill-treatment, bullying, deliberate rejection (low warmth, high criticism environment), humiliation, threats, ignoring.

Signs that a young person is being abused:

- Unexplained bruising.
- Continually suffering physical ailments with no medical explanation.
- Sexually explicit behaviour and language.
- Unaccounted for sources of money or presents.
- Fear of going home to parents or carers or of them being contacted.
- Changes over time in manner and appearance (e.g. losing weight, becoming dirty or disheveled, constant tiredness, always hungry).
- Drinks alcohol regularly from an early age.
- Is concerned for younger siblings without explaining why.
- Becomes secretive and reluctant to share information.
- Telling you about being asked to 'keep a secret' or dropping hints or clues about abuse.
- Talks of running away.
- Shows challenging / disruptive behaviour at school.
- Starts to bully or abuse others
- Is reluctant to get changed for sports etc.

Long term effects of abuse and neglect include:

- Emotional difficulties such as anger, anxiety, sadness or low self-esteem
- Mental health problems such as depression, eating disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), self-harm, suicidal thoughts.
- Drugs or alcohol problems .
- Disturbing thoughts, emotions and memories that cause distress or confusion
- Poor physical health such as obesity, aches and pains.
- Relationships problems or struggling with parenting.
- Worrying that their abuser is still a threat to themselves or others.
- Learning difficulties, lower educational attainment, difficulties in communicating.
- Behavioural problems including anti-social behaviour, criminal behaviour.

Grooming

- Children and young people can be groomed or by someone they have met - for example a family member, friend or professional.
- Children and young people can also be groomed online.
- Groomers may be male or female.
- They could be any age.
- Many children and young people don't understand that they have been groomed, or that what has happened is abuse.

How grooming happens

Grooming happens both online and in person. Groomers will hide their true intentions and may spend a long time gaining a child's trust. They may also try to gain the trust of the whole family so they can be alone with the child.

Groomers do this by:

- Pretending to be someone they are not (e.g. online).
- Offering advice or understanding.
- Buying gifts.
- Giving the child attention.
- Using their professional position or reputation.
- Taking them on trips, outings or holidays.
- Using secrets and intimidation to control children.

Once they have established trust, groomers will exploit the relationship by isolating the child from friends or family and making the child feel dependent on them. They will use any means of power or control to make a child believe they have no choice but to do what they want. These people may introduce 'secrets' as a way to control or frighten the child. Sometimes they will blackmail the child, or make them feel ashamed or guilty, to stop them telling anyone about the abuse.

Groomers may try to get into voluntary organisations to get access to vulnerable people as they believe the safeguarding procedures in these organisations aren't as strong. As staff should think the unthinkable, have a healthy scepticism and maintain a respectful uncertainty about their colleagues.

How common is grooming?

This isn't known because often children don't tell anyone what is happening to them. Children may not speak out because they are:

- Ashamed.
- Feeling guilty.
- Unaware that they're being abused.
- Believe they are in a relationship with a 'boyfriend' or 'girlfriend'.

What to do if you have concerns

It is not your responsibility to decide whether or not a child or young person is being abused, but it is your responsibility to act upon any concerns.

- Share your concerns (about a young person or another volunteer) with the person in charge of the session, your child protection officer or the chair of the management committee. Always check out any concerns – it's better to be safe than sorry.
- If the adult you're concerned about is the person in the organisation you would normally go to, to seek advice, ring Somerset Direct or the police.
- Make a note of your concerns – it may be that you need to keep a watching brief over time and things shouldn't be forgotten.
- If you don't think your concerns are being taken seriously, it is OK to call Somerset Direct and report your concerns – you can do this anonymously. This will be passed to Children's Social Care who are trained to deal with this. Your specific concern may not be enough for them to take direct action, but your concerns will be noted and may help build a picture. Your information will always be welcome.
- Don't feel intimidated by Children's Social Care or the police – they are sensitive to people's fears and trained to make difficult decisions. Your views will be taken seriously, but any actions taken will be determined by the best interests of the child.
- Think about who else you share your views with – it may be that all volunteers need to know there are concerns so that they can keep an eye out, but they may not need to know everything. Be careful not to stigmatise the young person or adult.

What to do if a young person tells you about abuse

Do:

- Make sure the young person knows you believe them and don't think they're to blame
- Stay calm and listen
- Treat any action seriously and always take action
- Explain to the young person that you must share this information
- Tell the young person what you're going to do
- Write down a record of the disclosure as soon as possible
- Keep things confidential – only named officers & professionals should know
- Make a referral to Somerset Direct or the police

Don't

- Cast doubt on what you're being told
- Promise to keep this a secret
- React in a way which will upset the young person more
- Panic
- Try to deal with this on your own
- Make promises you can't keep or say things you're not sure of about what will happen
- Challenge the suspected abuser – you could put the young person in more danger
- Tell people who don't need to know
- Investigate yourself, or examine / interrogate the young person

Over 90% of sexually abused children and young people were abused by someone they know

Useful contact numbers:

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| • Childline | 0800 1111 | • Somerset Direct | 0300 123 2224 |
| • NSPCC | 0808 800 5000 | • Police | 999 |