

Small Group Exercise – Prevention

Examples of abuse – discussion

Child sexual abuse – the possibilities for prevention

The following scenarios can be used to generate discussion about the *actions* that could have been taken to *prevent* the sexual abuse of children taking place. It is hoped that these can lead to discussion between people so that they can identify practical and achievable things that could be used in these circumstances that would have helped to prevent abuse from taking place.

Some or all of the scenarios can be used depending on the number of participants and time available.

Suggested issues or actions for consideration are given below each scenario for you to use in helping to guide the discussion.

- 1. Richard was sexually abused by a worker in the nursery he attended at age 3 years. The worker left her previous nursery job after concerns about her inappropriate boundaries with children.**

Issues

- Actions that should have been taken by the previous employing nursery?
- Reference checks by employing nursery
- PVG Scheme
- What checks should have been made by the nursery before employing the worker.

- 2. 14 year old Stella's parents were contacted by the school when it was noticed that a topless image of her was circulating around her year group. Six months later she was sexually abused online by a man she met on a social networking site, who asked her to perform sexual acts via webcam from her bedroom.**

Issues

- Internet Safety Programme within the school
- Did the school take appropriate action at the time? What else might they have done as well as contacting Stella's parents?
- Were child protection procedures used effectively in the first instance?
- Unsupervised bedroom access to computer – particularly when original problem had been identified.
- Stella's access to and use of other devices such as mobile phones etc.

- Are there programmes or information sources for *parents* in respect of online safety for young people?
- Was action taken with the social networking site?
- Was the matter reported and investigated and the perpetrator identified?

3. Alex, aged 10, is being sexually abused on a weekly basis by the 21 year old neighbour who babysits every Friday.

Issues

- What action could the parents have taken to discern if the babysitter was safe before allowing him to look after Alex?
- Were there any behaviours or factors in relation to either the child or the abuser that could have alerted the parents?
- Communication between Alex and his parents – have the parents helped Alex to understand risk and what to do if he feels at risk? What can parents use to help with this?

4. Rachel, aged 12, was sexually abused (penetrative sexual acts) by her stepfather who was in the habit of regularly walking in on her in her bedroom or even the bathroom. Her mother is not aware of the abuse but thinks that Rachel is making a fuss about nothing – we shouldn't be ashamed of our bodies.

Issues

- Privacy issues and boundaries within the home.
- Practical management – locks on bathroom doors
- What action could the mother have taken to prevent the abuse taking place?
- Are there any behaviours in either the child or the abuser that could have alerted the mother?
- Relationship and communication between mother and Rachel.
- Possible grooming *of the mother* by the perpetrator.

5. Marina, age 14, was sexually abused in a hotel by a middle aged man she met on the internet and who she became very attached to as he seemed to understand her when her parents didn't. She used to talk to her school friends about him and they knew of the meeting in the hotel.

Issues

- What information about online safety is available to Marina and her friends?
- What action could the parents have taken to prevent the abuse taking place?
- Could Marina's behaviour have alerted the parents?

- What could Marina's friends have done to prevent the situation developing? If the friends told their parents, what could they have done about this?
- What difference would it make if the man who abused Marina was a registered sex offender with previous convictions for possessing indecent images of children and online grooming? (Management of Offenders)

6. David, aged 14, is routinely sexually abused on his fortnightly visits to his aunt's house. He shares a bedroom with his 18 year old cousin, who shows him pornography on his laptop and asks to perform the acts that they've watched, including oral sex and anal penetration. His cousin has told him that others will think that he is gay if he says anything.

Issues

- What action could the parents or his aunt have taken to prevent the abuse taking place? Would it be automatically undesirable for a 14 year old boy to share a room with/spend time with his 18 year old male cousin?
- Are there any behaviours in either David or the abuser that could have alerted the parents?
- Possible developmental issues for David and his understanding of sex and sexuality. Are there possible sexual orientation issues here for either David or his cousin? If so, how should these be dealt with?

7. After a couple of violent relationships, Alison met Zac. "the best thing since sliced bread" through a dating agency. Following a whirlwind romance, where he helped her cope with the demands of her two young children and financial troubles. Zac moved in to save money on rent. He started sexually abusing the children soon after, and although Alison is concerned about his boundaries, she can't believe anything serious is going on.

Issues

- What action could Alison have taken to prevent the abuse taking place?
- Could she have used the Keeping Children Safe scheme?
- Are there any behaviours in the abuser that could have alerted Alison?
- Social issues for Alison
- Alison's own history growing up (previous experience of abuse might have made her more vulnerable or susceptible to grooming etc.)

8. Robert is in his mid twenties and lives with his parents. He has never had a serious sexual relationship but was aware of his attraction to girls on the cusp of puberty since his teenage years.

He has avoided illegal online material, but does masturbate to thoughts of girls he sees in his neighbourhood. He feels guilty afterwards and wishes that he wasn't like this. Friends of his parents visit one Sunday with their nine year old granddaughter. Robert is asked to occupy her while the adults talk, so whilst playing computer games in his bedroom he sexually abuses the child.

Issues

- What could Robert have done to address his attraction to young girls?
- Stop it Now! Helpline?
- What action could the parents or his parents friends have taken to prevent the abuse taking place?
- Are there any behaviours in either the child or Robert that could have alerted the parents?