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Getting help to overcome abuse

A quick guide for young people receiving support

QUICK GUIDE

This content has been co-produced by NICE and SCIE and is based on NICE's guideline on child abuse and neglect.

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Every child has the right to feel safe and have a happy childhood

Abuse or neglect of a child or young person is very serious and against the law.

If this has happened to you, it is really important you get the help and support you need. A guideline has been developed by NICE for people who work with children and young people to make sure they listen to your wishes and feelings and give you the best possible support.

This quick guide will help you understand what support you should expect.

What is child abuse and neglect?

Child abuse

is anything that someone does to cause harm to a child or young person. It can include:

- Physical abuse – such as hitting, punching, burning, kicking or using weapons.
- Sexual abuse – forcing you to have sex; touching you or making you touch them. This type of abuse can also happen online and includes making you watch pornography or forcing you to send intimate pictures.
- Emotional abuse – making you feel scared, worthless or unloved; ignoring you; controlling who you spend time with or where you go; constantly checking where you are or who you are with.

Neglect

is the ongoing failure to care properly for a child, for example not providing enough food, clothes or a safe place to live, or not getting medical care for you when you need it. It is also about a lack of love, care or attention.

About this quick guide

'Our voices are important.'
Young people involved in developing this guide

This guide has been written by young people who have experienced abuse or neglect.

15 young people from around the country were supported by AVA to help develop the NICE guideline on child abuse and neglect. They did this by talking about their experiences of seeking help and support, including sharing the challenges they faced as well as what worked well. When the guideline was finished, they wanted to write a quick guide to help other young people find out what support they are entitled to.

Two groups of young people worked with AVA again to design this guide, including agreeing which messages from the NICE guideline were most important to highlight, They hope it will help others in similar situations get the help and support they need and deserve, and urge practitioners to share it with the young people they meet.

'You don't have to live in silence, feel trapped or be alone any more.'
Young people involved in developing this guide

AVA Against Violence & Abuse

The Times College

ywhP Sexual Abuse Support Service

What do I do now?

If you are finding it difficult to get support you could get in touch with organisations like **National Youth Advocacy Service** (https://youngpeople.nyas.net/), or **Help at Hand** (https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/help-at-hand/). They can make sure your views, feelings and wishes are heard and taken seriously, and help you get the services you are entitled to.

Who else could help me?

If you need help you can speak to an adult you trust. It may be a doctor, keyworker, teacher, social worker – and they should follow this guideline.

There are also lots of organisations who specialise in helping children and young people affected by abuse and neglect. Here are some that you can speak to confidentially:

Childline
0800 1111

Rape Crisis
0808 802 9999

SupportLine
01708 765200

The Hideout

Healthwatch
03000 68 3000

Stop It Now! Helpline
0808 1000 900

National Youth Advocacy Service
0808 808 1001

Help at Hand
0800 528 0731

The guideline helps people who work with young people understand how best to support you if you have been abused or neglected. This could be talking about what has happened or taking action to help you feel safe.

What does the guideline say?

People working with children and young people should...

- ✓ Involve you in decisions about your life – your opinion should be taken into account
- ✓ Find the right way to communicate – it's ok to ask if you don't understand something
- ✓ Explain about confidentiality – when they may have to share information, what they will share and who with
- ✓ Ask permission if they need to touch you (for example, to examine you) and explain what they are going to do
- ✓ Write down, in your words, what you have talked about and get you to sign it – if you disagree with what they say, this should be written down too
- ✓ Share any reports and plans with you
- ✓ Tell you how to contact them, including out of hours, and check how you want them to contact you
- ✓ Work with other organisations to make sure you don't need to keep re-telling your story to different professionals
- ✓ Give you a choice of different therapies and support
- ✓ Help your parents or carers

How you may feel...

Not everyone is affected in the same way but abuse can change your feelings and behaviour in the following ways:

Being afraid

Crying a lot

Feeling very angry

Not feeling like talking

Wanting to keep control

Feeling suicidal

Other signs could include:

- Eating disorders or using drugs or alcohol
- Being dirty or not having enough clothes or food
- Hurting yourself
- Nightmares
- Being very affectionate with strangers
- Running away

Remember that what happened was not your fault.

What difference can the right support make?

A young person's story

Things were hard at home for a long time. I remember being scared all the time, and then I just kind of started to feel numb to everything. I skipped school, hung around with mates who were a bit older than me, anything to avoid being at home. We had different social workers coming round over the years. I didn't want to talk to them. What could they do? Would they even believe me? But there was this one woman who didn't give up. She actually talked to me and didn't treat me like a useless kid. She didn't push me, we went step by step on my terms. She showed that she really cared, and she gave me different options – for the first time I actually felt like there could be some hope, that life didn't have to always be like this.

She found help for my mum and little brother too. They go to a group to help them talk about what happened when my dad lived with us. And she spoke to my teachers so they understood why I was acting like I was. I do really want to learn, I just didn't think I was worth bothering about. But now I know I am.

Abuse can make you feel helpless and as though you are totally under the control of another person. It's really important that any help or support doesn't take even more control away from you, but empowers you and helps you to make choices as well as helping other people to understand what you have been through.