



A Guide to Running Groups Pre-Trial



About the Bluestar Project

This guide forms part of a suite of best-practice resources developed by Emma Harewood of [Harewood Consultancy](#) on behalf of the Bluestar Project. The [Bluestar Project](#) at [The Green House](#) was designed to understand the barriers and facilitators to accessing pre-trial therapy services among children and young people who have experienced sexual abuse. The subsequent training and resources have been designed to apply to any practitioner or service working pre-trial with any victims/survivors of any form of abuse/crime.

Contact the Bluestar Project

All resources and information about our Training and Accreditation Programme can be found at bluestarproject.co.uk
Contact the Team on: bluestarproject@the-green-house.org.uk

About this guide

This guide is designed to assist practitioners and services when setting up and running groups with children and young people, parents, or adults who are receiving support during an active police investigation and pre-trial.

There is a set of principles to follow when providing victims with therapy before a criminal trial. New Pre-Trial Therapy guidelines were published by the CPS in 2022, which apply to both adults and children/young people.

Although the CPS guidance was designed for therapy services, the information in this guide applies to services providing therapy, health and advocacy services for children and adults after experiencing sexual abuse. However, pre-trial therapy guidelines apply to all crime types where support services have been accessed prior to a case reaching court. The best practice guidance in this set of resources is also transferable to other service providers supporting

victims of other crime types e.g., domestic abuse services.

These guidelines were produced after consultation with experts and voluntary sector providers, and are aligned with the principles in the Attorney General's Guidelines on Disclosure 2022. This guide is **designed to be read in conjunction** with the [Bluester Pre-Trial Therapy Protocol](#) and [Guide to Note Keeping](#).

The previous CPS Pre-Trial Therapy Guidelines discouraged services from delivering groups pre-trial. The new guidelines are clearer and no longer say 'don't do groups', but do recommend certain kinds of group. If people want to access therapeutic pre-trial groups they should not be dissuaded if this is the right option for them, but that they do need to be made aware of the risks

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Definitions

'Pre-trial therapy' describes any therapeutic support given to children or adults during a criminal justice process. There are a set of principles to follow when providing victims with therapy during a criminal investigation and before a criminal trial, as described by the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS).

Victim

The term used for consistency in this document (rather than 'complainant', 'survivor' or 'witness') to refer to an adult, young person or child who has alleged that a crime has been committed against them. The term victim is used in this guide only when directly referring to or quoting the CPS guidelines.

Service user

An adult, young person or child who has alleged that a crime has been committed against them and for whom a referral has been received by a therapeutic service.

Therapist

Any professionally trained practitioner or one undergoing training who is providing therapy to victims.

Therapy

The range of psychological and emotional counselling and therapeutic approaches and support provided for difficulties that are associated with and/or exacerbated by a criminal offence.

Running groups pre-trial

The CPS first published guidance in 'Provision of Therapy for Vulnerable or Intimidated Adult Witnesses' in 2001 and in 2020 shared the revised 'Draft Guidance on Pre-Trial Therapy' for public

consultation. The final guidance was published in 2022 and seeks to clarify and enable access for victims to therapy and counselling, without impacting on criminal justice processes.

The CPS has made the following commitment to victims:

"You may be having or thinking about having therapy or counselling to help you recover from your experiences. We are clear that you should receive, as soon as possible, effective treatment and therapeutic support to assist your recovery. Therapy should not be delayed for any reason connected with a criminal investigation or prosecution. If you receive therapy before a trial the police must only collect notes from your

therapist or therapy provider in pursuit of a reasonable line of enquiry. It will only be a reasonable line of enquiry if there is some reason to believe that the notes will contain material relevant to the case. This is important in making sure there is a fair trial process. The information may also help us to build the case or be in a better position to respond to issues raised by the defence."

The previous CPS Guidelines (2002) were restrictive in terms of what kinds of support could be available to service users pre-trial. This included discouraging both access to therapy, talking about abuse within therapy and groups. The new CPS guidelines recommend not delaying therapy because of the criminal justice process, are permissive of a broad range of therapy types

including processing work and allow psychoeducational groups. **If service users want to access therapeutic groups pre-trial, they should not be dissuaded from this but informed of the risks to their criminal case (see below).** The CPS have made the following statement regarding the use of groups pre-trial:

CPS advise on certain types of group therapy:

"Group therapies in which victims and other participants focus primarily on and are required to share their experiences related to criminal offences can present difficulties in the criminal justice process. That is because the defence may argue that the potential for confusion, collaboration, undue and even unconscious influence and fantasy is much higher than in other types of therapy. Although the defence could

*seek to use memories recalled or shared in the course of this type of therapy to undermine the credibility of related evidence, it is for the victim to decide whether to access this type of therapy based on their needs, health and wellbeing. **Group therapy that focuses on psychoeducation emotional support and coping strategies should not be considered to be in any way undermining.**"*

Types of Group Work Pre-Trial

Specialist therapeutic and support services offer a wide range of groups to victims of abuse, including:

- Psycho-education courses for young people, adults and parents
- Counselling/therapeutic groups
- Short self-help courses and webinars
- Structured group education programmes
- Creative arts groups including dance, writing, yoga, forest bathing
- Empowerment groups and activities
- Online groups
- Survivor/peer led groups for young people or parents
- Forums and co-production groups for service improvement

This guidance applies to setting up and running any type of group, but each group will need planning and adjustments to meet the specific risks related to the type of group setting.

Benefits of group work pre-trial

There are myths and misunderstandings about therapeutic work in group settings which have historically caused concern to the legal profession, and can leave therapists worried about offering group support. However, under the new CPS guidelines groups can be run pre-trial.

Professional expertise, research and the voices of service users tell us that groups are extremely beneficial in the recovery journey. Benefits include:

- Shared experiences and not needing to explain yourself
- A sense of belonging
- Reduction in feelings of shame and isolation
- Improvements in self-esteem and confidence
- Peer mentoring bring hope for the future

These benefits when diverse communities who face additional barriers to accessing support come together, such as groups that identify as LGBTQI+ and members of the Global Majority. Service users note the benefits of receiving validation in a group setting from a peer that has also experienced abuse.

Evaluations of groups in sexual violence services like the Rockpool Sexual Violence Recovery Toolkitⁱ and The Lighthouse psychoeducation course (based on Washington Coalition Circle of Hope courseⁱⁱ) found a reduction in feelings of isolation, improved self-esteem, greater confidence and improved wellbeing and ability to manage stress.

A parent group member said:

"I feel better equipped now to handle the situation when things get tricky. It has been such a relief to have this space. We are all from such different backgrounds and yet we have so much in common."

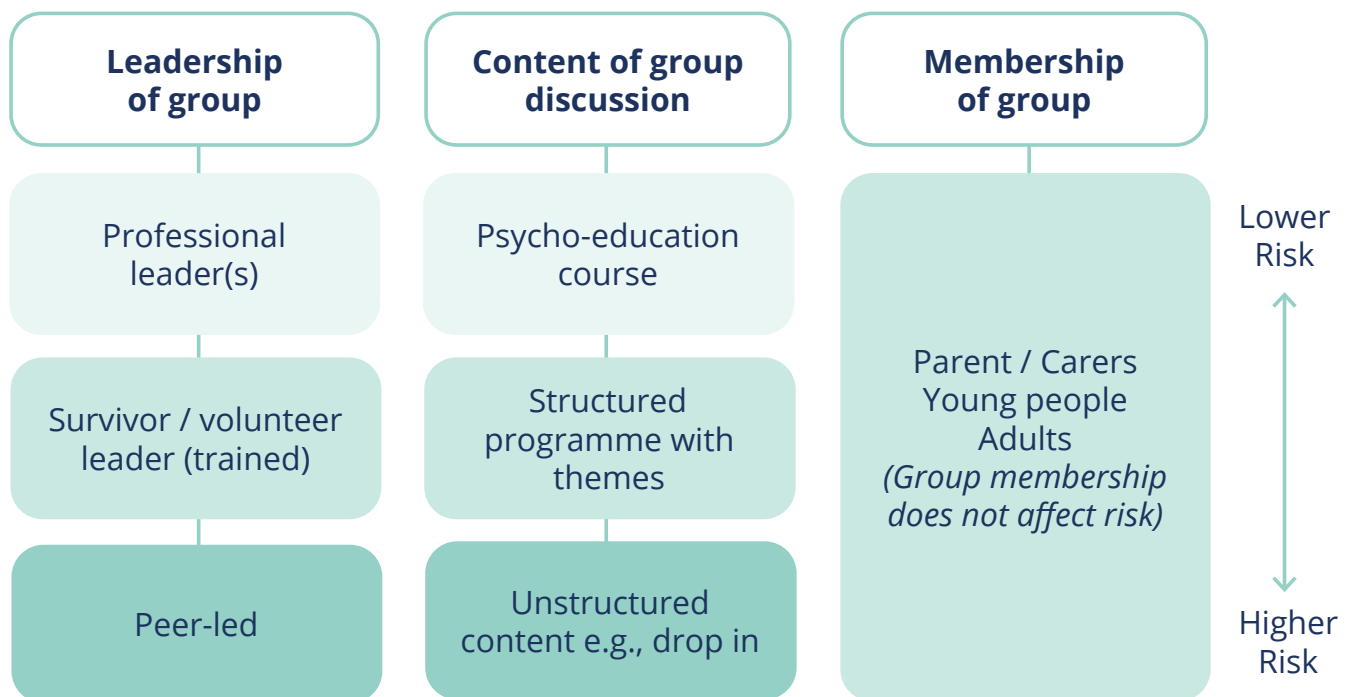
As well as academic research of support in group settings^{iii, iv, v, vi, vii} which identified that survivors felt empowered through the group intervention and had developed skills, such as learning how to assert boundaries, which enabled positive changes to occur in their lives. Survivors were able to re-engage in different aspects of their lives, as well as noting reductions in physical and emotional stress symptoms and increases in self-esteem, confidence and having a positive view of themselves and the world. Creating a trusting relationship with peers participating in the group was central to the healing process, which was especially important to survivors from the Global Majority. A sense of shared experiences created solidarity, with differences in distance travelled within the recovery journey offering opportunity for peer mentors to demonstrate that recovery was possible.

Risks associated with Groups pre-trial

The CPS guidelines highlight that group therapies which focus primarily on disclosing or sharing experiences related to criminal offence can present difficulties to the criminal justice process. This is because there is a risk that defence teams can argue that hearing the accounts of others can change or influence a service user's memory. Whereas, group therapy that focuses on psychoeducation emotional support and coping strategies should not be considered to be in any way undermining.

This means that workshops and structured groups that create clear contracting with victims, can enable service users to benefit from a group setting whilst minimising the risk of shared case information that would impact the criminal justice process.

While certain structured, psychoeducational groups are considered lower risk - if a service user wants to access therapeutic groups pre-trial they should not be dissuaded from this but informed of the risks to their criminal case.



Potential risks to the criminal justice process

Therapists and service providers are required to make individual assessments of the risks when setting up each type of group. Risks are variable and dependent on three key factors: group leadership/facilitation, content of discussion and group membership.

Groups that are led by a pair of professional facilitators have a lower risk of detailed case discussion compared with a volunteer/ support worker or peer-led group. A pair of professional facilitators who have received comprehensive pre-trial therapy training may be more able to set clear ground rules and to interrupt a service user should they start to share case information.

Groups that are educational, informative or focus on structured topics, are less likely for discussion to move to detailed case information. Whereas, experience suggests that, group membership has little impact on the risk of case information being shared – with parents, adults and young people being equally likely to avoid or share case information.

Common risks in groups

A greater risk when running groups in sexual violence services, are the emotional impact and potential triggering from group discussions. Group leaders should consider how they will manage emotional impact in the group, considering dual facilitation and support mechanisms after and outside of the group. Common risks include:

- Group members becoming distressed by someone else who is upset or angry
- Group members may feel the need to rescue each other – important to keep reminding of the victim/rescuer/attacker triangle
- A group can become weighed down by grief and upset and struggle to lift back to a hopeful place
- The unpredictability of the level of distress

Myths and facts from the CJS system

- ✘ Myth** - Young people will be influenced by listening to the each other's experiences and they may use this information to fill in gaps in their own memory as has been described as "false memory syndrome"
- ✔ Fact** - There is little to no robust evidence around false memory recall as a result of participating in groups.

- ✘ Myth** - Young people will hear each other's experience and imagine that happened to them
- ✔ Fact** - Meeting someone else who has experienced a sexual assault may lead to a service user to reflect on their own abuse experience, and recognise it for the first time as sexual abuse

- ✘ Myth** - Spending time with other victims, could lead them to inflate their own experience into something worse than it was
- ✔ Fact** - As psychoeducational groups progress, feelings of self-blame may diminish and support survivors to understand that the only person to blame for the abuse is the perpetrator. With this new awareness, survivors are likely to become more aware of the serious nature of the assault they experienced.

- ✘ Myth** - Victims that are confident and less distressed at interview, as a result of attending a group, will appear complacent and less believable to a jury
- ✔ Fact** - Therapeutic support should improve wellbeing and enable a victim to give a clear testimony of evidence for the jury

- ✘ Myth** - Victims will contact each other outside a group and share the detail of their criminal case with each other
- ✔ Fact** - Victims often create supportive and validating friendships in the group which they continue to grow through contact outside of the group - but that does not mean they will share the full detail of their criminal case. They should not be prevented from creating ongoing support networks by services delivering support.

- ✘ Myth** - Everyone attending a group should be aware that a defence team could argue they have been influenced by the group members
- ✔ Fact** - Each group leader should clearly explain that there is risk that defence teams will use any avenue to challenge the integrity of a victim's testimony. However, it is important to remember only 3% of cases make it to trial.

Getting ready to start a group

Before starting a group for service users that are pre-trial it is important to assess readiness to join the group and to contract for clear ground rules. Ideally groups will be made of service users or family members that bring

experiences of similar types of abuse (e.g. intra-familial, online, exploitation) or characteristics (e.g. parents of children with disabilities, refugees, LGBTQI+), to enhance the sense of belonging.

Assessing readiness

Many services consider group work as an intervention at the initial assessment with a service user, and there may be a number of service users or family members waiting for each group to select from. Assessment prior to invitation to join a group should include a one-to-one session, ideally in a similar format to the group (face-to-face, online or activity based) and include a standard assessment. Most group programmes include a standard assessment which should cover:

- Physical health and mental health conditions, including eating disorders
- Mental health needs, including symptoms (flashbacks, dissociation), level of coping and risk of suicide
- Type of abuse and whether recent/non-recent
- Risks to self and others, such as violence and aggression
- Risk of further abuse and safety planning
- Additional contextual information such as family, education, employment, housing
- Current or previous counselling including what was useful
- Hopes for the group
- Availability and commitment to attend group sessions

See [Appendix 1: SAMPLE Group Assessment](#).

Contracting

An important part of contracting in pre-trial groups includes introducing the group members to the concept of potential defence challenges if case information is shared, as well as reminding them about respect and

confidentiality in group settings. This can be started in the assessment process and again at the start of the group sessions. A sample contracting agreement for use at the assessment stage can be found at [Appendix 2: SAMPLE Group Contract](#).

Therapists should explain to group members that in groups pre-trial, there are live criminal investigations underway for some or all group members. This means that group members should not share detailed case information (e.g., factual information that was shared as part of the Victim's Police Statement) in the group sessions. If anyone starts to share detailed case information the facilitator will be required to interrupt them, to prevent any risk of breach of information. The facilitator should follow up with that group member after the session ends, to remind them of the risks

to their case and that of the other group members. On occasion, a facilitator may assess that the discussions are triggering the group member and suggest that the group may not be right for them at this time.

At the first meeting of a group, a series of ground rules can be co-designed with group members, verbally agreed, documented by the facilitator and a copy of the ground rules provided. In some services, a written ground rules/consent sheet is signed by all group members. See [Appendix 3: SAMPLE Ground rules](#).

Example script for introducing pre-trial group contracting

Explain that pre-trial therapy is any therapy service that is provided while a criminal investigation is underway and before an allegation has gone to trial.

Explain that the group is subject to the same requirements of pre-trial therapy services as outlined by the CPS guidelines.

Explain that the choice to access the group before, after or during the criminal justice process is theirs.

As part of the criminal justice process, the police or CPS may seek to access to the notes we keep about these sessions – but we only keep minimal group notes such as attendance and session topic.

In this group, we ask you not to talk about or recall the factual detail of the allegation that's under investigation (e.g., specific pieces of information in your Victim's Statement to the Police). It is important that you do not do so in front of other group members as this could have implications for them and their CJS process, as well as your CJS process.

We will keep information about you confidential unless you give us your permission to share notes, we are worried about your safety or there is a legal reason to share information.

Group and psycho-education course content

There is no set group/course content pre-trial, but a course or group with a schedule of topics and themes is less likely to move into detailed case discussion. Many specialist providers use evidenced based programmes or use them to create a bespoke course. Evidence based programmes include: Rockpool^{viii}, Circle of Hope^{ix}.

Common themes/topics in groups:

- Introducing the idea of 'healing' as a journey
- Understanding the impact of trauma on the body and mind e.g. Flippin' the lid, five Fs, window of tolerance
- Dispelling the myths and common feelings after abuse e.g. shame, isolation, stigma, blame
- Exploring the importance of self-care
- Building communication skills for parents in order to support their children and themselves
- Sex and sexuality – including intrusive thoughts
- Helping parents reclaim intimacy and positive relationships in their own lives
- Use of artwork and imagery to make sense of the abuse
- Family and relationship dynamics, including typical teenage behaviour, managing behaviours and parenting challenges
- Resetting the narrative – this was not your child's first sexual experience, it was an incident of power and control being exerted over them
- Moving into the future with confidence and hope

Support alongside group / courses

For many service users, group work is offered as an alternative to one-to-one therapy or after one-to-one therapy has ended. For this reason, there may need to be some consideration of support

before, during and after the sessions. Many groups/courses are offered with an accompanying self-help guide, homework or resources.

Note keeping in group sessions

Note keeping in group sessions should follow existing organisational and professional guidance on record keeping, information sharing and information security; as well as the current legal framework. **The CPS advise keeping note taking in groups to a minimum and not making any recordings of group sessions.** Some record or case management systems provide a note keeping section for group meetings, but others use the existing case note chronology for each service user.

A sample note for a group could include:

- Name of group facilitator(s)
- Name of service users who attended
- Topic of session
- Date of group session

A sample of an individual record could include:

- Date of group session
- Group session number
- Topic of group session

Case examples:

Parent drop-in:

These sessions are facilitated by a volunteer parent, with no formal programme structure and a group led discussion. The group carries a potential risk of unplanned conversations that could include detailed case descriptions. There are no notes taken and no record of attendance at the drop ins in the child's clinical notes. If parents are part of the group and their child's case is pre-trial, they are advised there is a risk that defence lawyers may argue they have been discussing the detail of each other's cases and been unduly influenced. It is the parents' choice whether the benefit they gain from the support of other parents in a similar situation, outweighs any potential impact on a future criminal trial.

Psycho-education course for young people:

This group is led by a therapist and a case worker, with a series of themed topics to cover each week. The group agree ground rules which include a clear request not to share detailed case information with each other. The team take minimal notes of each session, noting only the topic covered and who attended. Young people are reminded not to discuss the detail of their cases with each other if they are in contact outside of the group.



Appendix 1: SAMPLE Group Assessment

| Information | | | |
|---------------------------|--|----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| Name | | Age | |
| Record ID | | D.O.B | |
| Address | | | |
| Telephone | | Postcode | |
| Email | | | |
| Preferred site / location | | Virtual support preference | <Has access to confidential space for phone sessions?> |

| | | | |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| Contact preferences | Phone <remind that service number will appear unknown> | Email <Does anyone else have access?> | Post <Who do they live with?> |
| Preferred method of contact | y/n | y/n | y/n |

| Emergency Contact Details | | | |
|---------------------------|--|--------------|--|
| Name | | Relationship | |
| Phone | | | |

| Abuse type - tick all that apply | | | |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| Timing of abuse | <input type="checkbox"/> Childhood | <input type="checkbox"/> Adult | |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Recent (last 12 months) | <input type="checkbox"/> Non-recent | |
| Type of abuse | <input type="checkbox"/> Rape | <input type="checkbox"/> CSA | <input type="checkbox"/> CSE |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Sexual Assault | <input type="checkbox"/> Sibling sexual abuse | <input type="checkbox"/> Online |
| Other risk factors | <input type="checkbox"/> Trafficking | <input type="checkbox"/> DV | <input type="checkbox"/> Multiple perpetrators |

| Criminal Justice - tick all that apply | | | |
|---------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| Has the abuse been reported to the police? | <input type="checkbox"/> Told police | What stage is the investigation? | <input type="checkbox"/> Referred to CPS |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Planning to tell police | <input type="checkbox"/> Under investigation | <input type="checkbox"/> Trial awaited |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Has an ISVA? | | <input type="checkbox"/> Trial complete |

Prompt: Introduce the concept of potential defence challenges if case information is shared in a group and explain that they will not be able to share detailed case information in the group sessions. If anyone starts to share detailed case information the facilitator will be required to interrupt them, to prevent any risk of breach of information.

Continued below



Health assessment – are there any health reasons that would impact on attendance at a group?

Physical Health: *Examples: Eating disorder, Epilepsy, Asthma, accessibility needs*

Medication?

Mental Health: *Prompt: Discuss suicide ideation (safety plan if necessary) and how are they coping? *Include symptoms such as: Flashbacks, Nightmares, Dissociation*

Medication?

Risks - are there any risks that would impact on attendance at a group?

Safety risks: *Prompt: Are they still in contact with alleged perpetrator? Are there any domestic abuse risks? How are they keeping safe? (Self/others) *make safety plan if necessary**

Risks to others / staff: *Prompt: History of violence +/- or aggression?*

Contextual risks: *Prompt: Do they need any support with any of the following outside of the group before they can fully engage? Housing, substance misuse, isolation, faith, language barriers, local community. Is anyone already supporting them with this already? Is that working for them?*

Additional information

Current relationships *Prompt: Who are the important people in their lives? Partner? Friends? Family?*

Pregnancy and children *Prompt: Currently Pregnant? Caring for children up to 6 months old? *include age of children and whether living at home*

Employment/ School

Any other trauma experiences *Any ongoing support needs not covered above*

Continued below



Previous counselling

*Prompt: What did you find useful when you previously accessed counselling?
detail any previous counselling? Including any currently accessed

Hopes for the group

Prompt: What are your hopes for this group?

Concerns or anticipated challenges about coming to a group

Prompt: Where do you see yourself having the most difficulty as we begin to talk about abuse and trauma? How might you manage this?

For assessors- consider, do these concerns seem typical to most group members' concerns?

Assessing Readiness

Prompt: Have you been in group(s) before and how did you find it? How comfortable are you with sharing feelings or experiences in a group?

For assessors- any concerns around self-disclosure or talking in a group expressed/noticed?

Managing group dynamics

Prompt: Are there ways you feel you could be supported to contribute in group discussions- what would help you? How would you manage if you wanted to challenge or question something raised in the group? Or if you felt challenged?

For assessors- Discuss role of facilitators in supporting group dynamics and discussion

Continued below



Parenting

Prompt: Acknowledge the value of hearing a range of ways of coping and responding in the group which creates balance and difference. Are they open to sharing ideas and hearing alternative ways to responding to their child OR would this feel like a criticism/like something else to worry about if already overwhelmed?

Trauma response

Prompt: Find out what stage they are at dealing with and responding to their child's trauma. Numb/shock, in denial, angry, helpless, etc. Are they able to acknowledge their child's abuse to themselves and others?

Parental abuse

Prompt: Does the parent have their own sexual abuse/trauma history they want us to be aware of? Where do they feel they are in their own journey with this?

Availability and commitment

Prompt: Introduce the importance of commitment and stability in the group. Ask if they can commit to attend regularly?

Support

Prompt: How would you managed if you were upset by something in the group or felt challenged? What support would they need in place to enable attendance? E.g. transport, a supporter

| Availability | Morning | Afternoon | Evening |
|--------------|---------|-----------|---------|
| Monday | | | |
| Tuesday | | | |
| Wednesday | | | |
| Thursday | | | |
| Friday | | | |

| | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| Date | |
| Assessor | |
| Staff involved in case discussion | |



Appendix 2: **SAMPLE** Group Contract

Please read the following pages carefully, then sign and return the consent form to begin the therapy process.

What is the group?

<<insert a description of the group including purpose, who the group is for, content of sessions, number and frequency of sessions>>

For example: This group is a 12-week creative therapy group for young people aged 15-19 who have experienced sexual abuse or assault. The group has a playful and reflective approach to bringing young people together and working towards feeling stronger. The group aims to reduce isolation, support emotional regulation and aid understanding of how we are affected by trauma.

For example: The weekly sessions will combine a psycho-educational presentation on a theme before moving into small or whole group discussion and reflection time. Sometimes we will explore a topic in small groups through talking, writing and using art materials. You can choose how you share your thoughts and you do not have to be a skilled writer or artist; what is most important is what helps you to think about and process the information that has been shared so that it is meaningful to you.

Working Therapeutically in a Group

Group therapy is a unique kind of therapy where a group of people who are experiencing similar challenges work together towards feeling stronger. We will make sure that the group is a safe place for sharing, accepting and taking care of each other. There is no expectation to share anything you do not want to about your history and experiences; you are invited to share as much or as little as feels comfortable.

Hearing other people's stories and experiences can bring up different feelings within us. The therapists will work with you to understand, identify and respond to any triggers you have that are activated in the group.

Post-session check-in calls with one of the facilitators can be arranged if: you feel you need to talk to one of the facilitators between sessions about an issue that you have not been able to bring to the group; you miss a session; if you have found some of the material or group work emotionally challenging and need some time to process this individually.

Working in a group pre-trial

If groups members have an open police investigation and their case be 'pre-trial', there is a risk to the outcome of the criminal trial if case information is shared. For this reason, we ask you not to share detailed case information in the group sessions. If anyone starts to share detailed case information the facilitator will be required to interrupt them, to prevent any risk of breach of information.

Group commitments and Confidentiality

In group work people often share personal stories. Confidentiality means keeping everything that is shared in the group safe and private. It is OK to share what you have learned in the group/course, and the topics discussed, but are asked to do so

Continued below



in a way that respects and protects everyone's privacy and does not compromise the confidentiality of the other members of the group. For example, if you talk about your experience of being in our group to others outside the group, it is very important not to use identifying details of other members.

To help everyone feel a sense of safety, we ask participants to commit to the following:

- When sharing personal experiences, try to make sure that they are within the scope of the topic or being discussed.
- Do not share identifying information about an event, court case or about the person who abused you or your child.
- For parent group contracts - It is OK to use your child's name, if you would like to. This will be something we think about when setting up the course agreement together with other group members too.

What to expect

During the course, there may be discussions that bring up painful or upsetting feelings and memories for you. At times you might:

- Feel emotions in response to the trauma of sexual abuse including anger, shame and powerlessness.
- Experience vulnerability or exposure after sharing an aspect of your experience or feelings with others
- Find it difficult hearing about others' experiences or about aspects of the impact of sexual abuse that others are struggling with.
- Be validated by sharing your emotions in the group
- Discover new ways to manage and work with uncomfortable feelings
- Feel more able to connect with others as you experience the support of people the group.
- Build your confidence by realising how much you already know and intuitively do to support your child.

Attendance, Cancellations and holidays

Regular attendance is important. We ask that you attend these sessions regularly and on time to create group stability and a feeling of safety. Missed or delayed sessions interrupt the process, making it less effective for everyone.

If you miss two sessions in a row, you will not be able to attend the rest of the group sessions and the facilitators will think with you about whether you would like to return to a future course if the timing was not right for you, or whether there were other areas of support you and your family might need.

Cancellations

We understand that occasionally a session has to be cancelled unexpectedly. We ask that you please give us as much notice as possible. If you have to cancel on the day, you can contact us by phone call or text.



Signed Contract

- I have read and understand the contract and agree to its terms and conditions.
- I provide my full consent to join the group.
- I agree to attend the group regularly and on time, and that I will inform the service if I am unable to attend.

Signed:

Name:

Date:

Counsellor / therapist signature:

Name:



Appendix 3: **SAMPLE** Ground rules / Group agreement to use in first session

We agree that:

- We're all here to support each other. We know why we're here together, but we don't necessarily have to speak about this, and some people may not want to. We will be mindful of what we share and what questions we're asking – are they supportive or just curious?
- We will take care of ourselves – if we need time out, or want to speak to one of the facilitators, we can, and they can give us space or support. Each of us is the expert of what we need.
- If our case is within the criminal justice system, we will take care not to discuss specific details of the incident under investigation (e.g., the factual information included in our Victims Statement given to the Police). - for the safety of our case and other peoples
- We will be non-judgemental and make this a welcoming space for all women including women of any age, religion, sexual orientation, women with disabilities, trans women, women of any racial, ethnic or cultural background.
- We agree that what's said in the group stays in the group – this is a confidential space. Exceptions to this will include if a facilitator is concerned that you or someone else is at risk of harm*. Facilitators may speak to their supervisor.
- We will respect other people's right not to be identified outside the group.
- We will support the facilitators to run the group and we'll be careful not to cross-talk over each other.

What else would the group like to agree to?

** Please ask them for more details on this if you need to.*

References

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