

# Surviving sexual abuse



What you can do if  
you think you have  
been sexually abused

**An easy-read guide**

## What this leaflet is about

This leaflet is about sexual abuse. It tells you what you can do if you have been sexually abused, and where you can get help and support. Sexual abuse can happen to anyone. It can happen to men or women. It can happen to young people or older people. It can happen to people with learning disabilities too.





## ◉ What is sex?

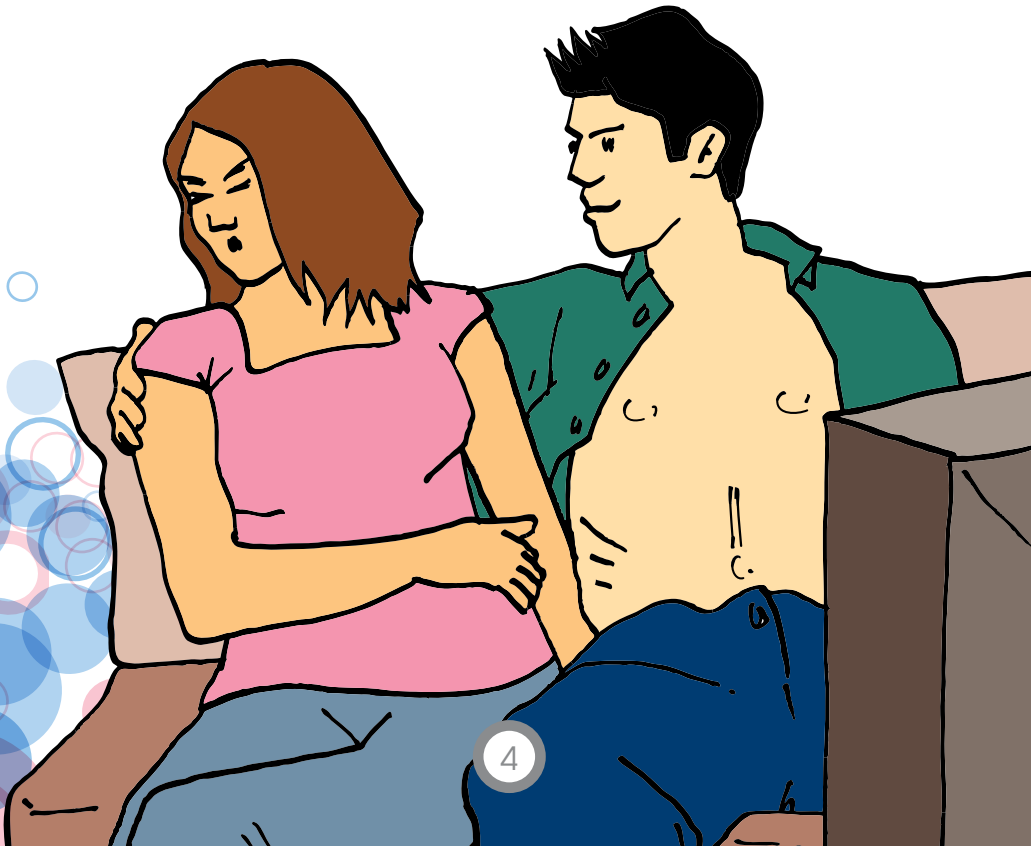
Sex often starts with kissing and cuddling and touching each other's bodies. Sex can happen between a man and a woman, or between 2 women or 2 men. Sex usually happens with your girlfriend or boyfriend or your husband or wife.

If you are over 16 and you understand what sex is and you want it to happen, it means that you consent to sex. It is okay to have sex if you know what it is and you consent to it.

If someone makes you do sexual things that you do not want to do or do not understand, it is wrong. This is called sexual abuse.

# What is sexual abuse?

Sexual abuse is when someone makes you do something sexual or touches you in a way that makes you uncomfortable. Sexual abuse is a serious crime. It is against the law. The law says that sexual abuse is **always** wrong. Sexual abuse can happen to men or women.

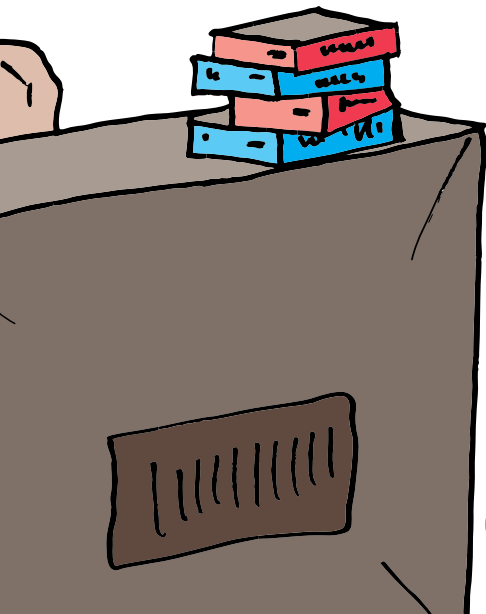




Here are some things that can be sexual abuse.

It may be sexual abuse if someone:

- Has sex with you when you do not want to, or tries to have sex with you when you do not want to
- Makes you touch their body when you do not want to
- Makes you watch sexy DVDs or look at sexy pictures
- Takes their clothes off and makes you look at them.



It may be sexual abuse if someone:

- Touches themselves in a sexual way in front of you
- Says sexual things to you that make you feel uncomfortable
- Kisses you when you do not want them to
- Touches your body when you do not want them to.



It is not OK for someone to offer you money or presents to do something that you do not want to do. This is also abuse.

Sometimes support staff need to help people with personal care, like going to the toilet or having a bath. This should be done in private. No-one else should watch you getting personal care.

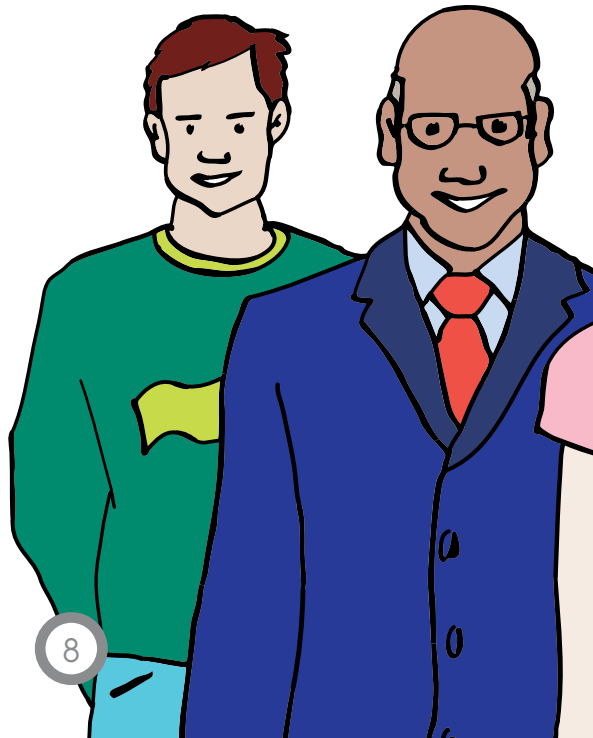


# Who can be an abuser?

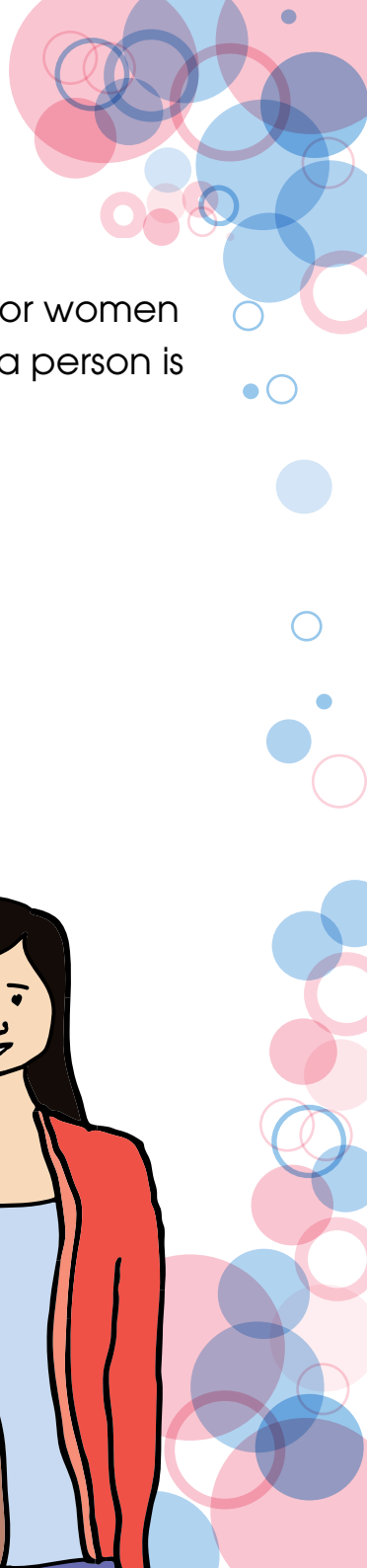
Sometimes a stranger can try to sexually abuse you. Sometimes it is someone you know and trust.

It can be someone like:

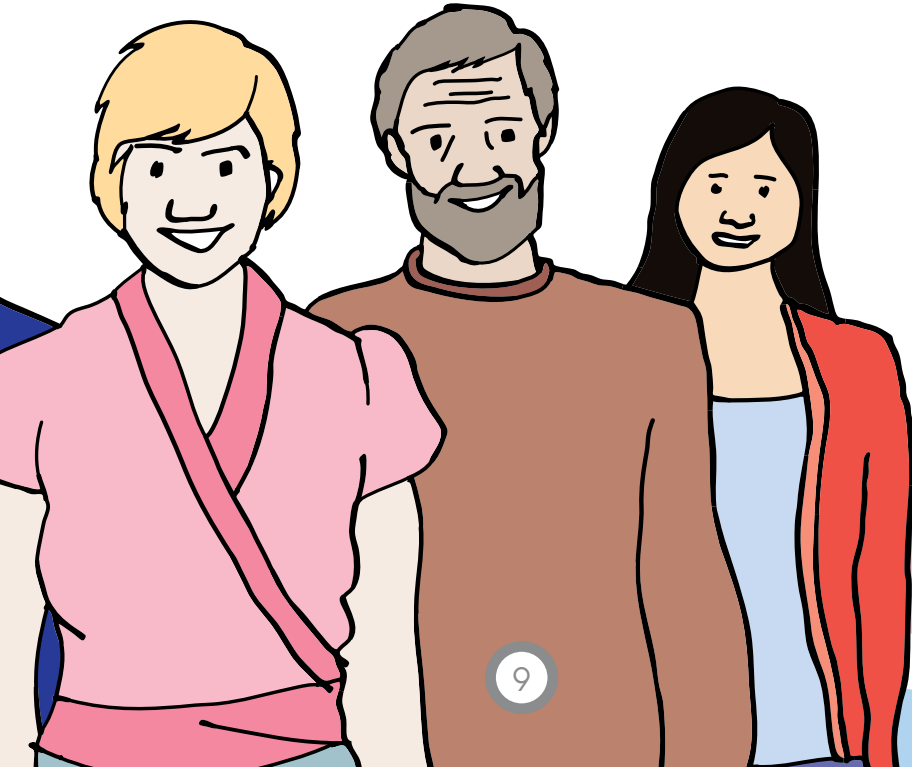
- Your neighbour
- Your support worker or carer
- Your partner
- Your parent or someone in your family
- Someone who lives in the same house as you
- Your friend
- Someone who works with you
- Someone who uses the same service as you.







Abusers look like everyone else. Men or women can be abusers. You cannot tell that a person is an abuser just by looking at them.



# What if you have been sexually abused?

Sexual abuse happens to a lot of people. If it has happened to you, you have done nothing wrong and it is not your fault. The person who abused you may have told you to keep it a secret. This is because they know that sexual abuse is always wrong.

If you have been abused, you should tell someone that you trust.



# How do you feel?

Sexual abuse can make you feel:

- Sad
- Angry
- Worried
- Dirty or ashamed
- Guilty
- Frightened.

You will often know the person who abused you. You can feel mixed-up because you like the person or because he or she also cares for you. Remember, sexual abuse is never your fault. If you think you have been sexually abused, tell someone.

## Who can you tell?

If you think you have been sexually abused, tell someone you can trust, like a friend, a supporter, your doctor, someone in your family or a social worker. If the person you tell does not listen to you, tell someone else.



# What happens when you tell someone?

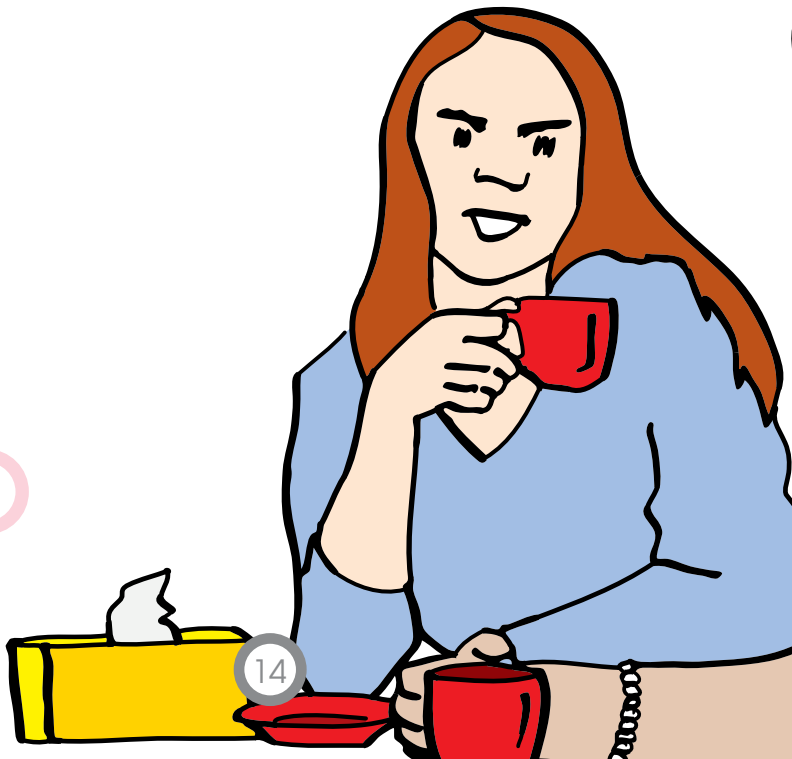
Sexual abuse is against the law so you can report it to the police. The police will ask you what happened and when it happened. They will write down what you tell them.

If you were abused a long time ago, it might be hard for the police to find enough proof to take your case to court. This does not mean that the police will not believe what you tell them.



If you tell a friend or someone in your family, they can help you to decide what to do next.

You can tell your support worker, but every service has rules about what happens when someone says they have been abused. Your support worker must follow these rules. The rules may say that your support worker has to tell someone else, like a social worker or the police.



## ◉ Why should you tell someone?

You should tell someone if you have been sexually abused so that you get the support you need to deal with it. It can make you feel better to talk to someone.

If the abuse is still going on, or if it happened recently, the person you tell can make sure that you are safe.

By telling, you can stop abuse happening to you or someone else.



# How can you keep yourself safe?

Sexual abuse is never your fault.

Say **No** if someone asks you to do something you do not want to do.

Tell someone you trust.

Ask a support worker or someone you trust to help you to find out more about sex and relationships.





Remember, it is okay to have sex if you and the other person are over 16, if you both understand what sex is and if you both agree to it.

## ◉ What the law says



The law says that it is always wrong to do anything sexual with people who cannot give consent.



The law says that it is always wrong to do anything sexual with people under 16.



The law says that it is always wrong for workers to do anything sexual with people that they support.



The law says that it is always wrong to have sex with somebody who says **No**.



## Who else can you talk to?

If you have been sexually abused you can call Rape Crisis Scotland. Their helpline is open every day from 6pm until midnight. It is free to call.

The number is

**08088 01 03 02** **RAPE CRISIS SCOTLAND**

Men or women can call this helpline. Your friend or support worker can call this helpline too.

Rape Crisis Scotland has trained staff you can talk to. Even if you were abused a long time ago, you can call the helpline.



## ○ Moving on from sexual abuse

Sexual abuse is a bad thing to happen to anyone. Sadly, it is quite common and it happens to people of all ages. If you have been sexually abused, you can talk to people who can help you to move on from it.

You can ask your doctor to refer you to a counsellor. A counsellor is a person who has been trained to listen to people talking about things that have happened to them. A counsellor can help you to work out what you want to do, and everything you tell him or her is private.

Many people who have been sexually abused manage to move on from it and go on to have a good life.

For more information  
about learning disability or for  
more copies of this leaflet, please call  
ENABLE Scotland's information line.  
It is open between 1pm and 4pm  
every weekday.

**0141 226 4541**

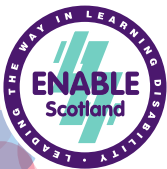
## **ENABLE Scotland**

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This booklet was written by ENABLE Scotland's Accessible Information Unit. It was made possible by the generous financial support of the Scottish Government. Thanks to Rape Crisis Scotland for their help.



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Charity No: SC009024  
A limited company registered in Scotland No: 278976