

FAMILY SAFETY PLAN



Creating a family safety plan helps create an environment to better protect your children from sexual abuse. By understanding what puts children at risk of sexual abuse, we can take action to counter those risks. It's important that you review and update plan every.

1 KNOW THE SIGNS



A "Warning sign" is a red flag, an "opportunity for prevention" Signs that a child is being sexually abused are often present, but they can be indistinguishable from other signs of child stress, distress, or trauma.

BE AWARE THAT IN SOME CHILDREN THERE ARE NO SIGNS WHATSOEVER.

If you find physical signs that you suspect are sexual abuse, have the child physically examined immediately by a professional who specialises in child sexual abuse.

EMOTIONAL OR BEHAVIOURAL SIGNALS ARE MORE COMMON

- ➔ Behavioural problems, physical aggression, non-compliance, and rebellion
- ➔ Suddenly having nightmares or other sleeping problems
- ➔ Lack of interest in friends, sports, and other activities
- ➔ Having unexplained gifts such as toys, money, mobile phone, expensive clothes.
- ➔ Becoming withdrawn or very clingy
- ➔ Unaccountable fear of particular places or people
- ➔ "Too perfect" or overly compliant behaviour
- ➔ Personality changes or suddenly seeming insecure
- ➔ Outbursts of anger
- ➔ Becoming secretive
- ➔ Anxiety, depression, fear, withdrawal, and suicidal thoughts
- ➔ Sexual behaviour and language that are not age-appropriate
- ➔ Nightmares, bed-wetting, bullying, and cruelty to animals

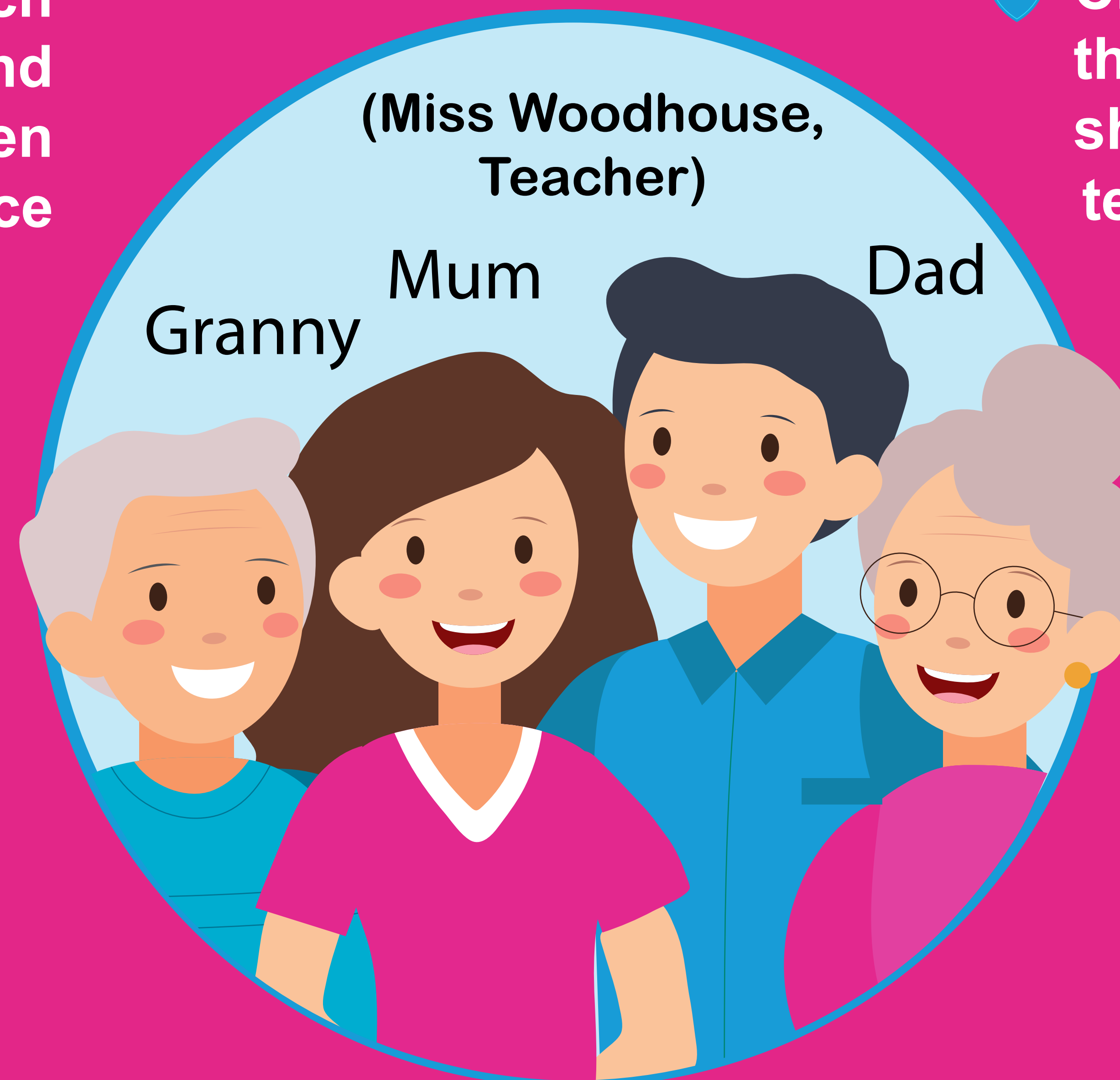
2 EDUCATE ALL FAMILY MEMBERS

- ➔ Teach children the proper names for body parts and what to do if someone tries to touch them in a sexual way and that **NOBODY** has the right to touch them.
- ➔ Understand that over 90% of abusers are people you know, and often become friendly with potential victims and their families, enjoying family activities, earning trust, and gaining time alone with children.
- ➔ Safer environments can help reduce the risk for abuse. More than 80% of sexual abuse cases occur in isolated, one-on-one situations, think before you leave your children with someone.
- ➔ Remember most abuse in the family remains undisclosed. Children may fear their abuser, not want their abuser to get into trouble, feel that the abuse was 'their fault', and feel responsible for what will happen to their family if they tell.
- ➔ Think carefully about the safety of situations in which older youth have access to younger children. Make sure that multiple adults are present who can supervise.



3 CIRCLE OF TRUSTED ADULTS

- ➔ Establish a small number of trusted adults for each child in your family to talk to if there is a concern, and carefully watch your children's body language when choosing, (if they feel uncomfortable with your choice this could be a red flag).
- ➔ At least one of the trusted adults should be outside of your immediate family. If a child is a victim of incest, they should be able to tell someone outside the family.
- ➔ 90% OF ABUSE IS CARRIED OUT BY SOMEONE THE CHILD KNOWS, LOVES OR TRUSTS SO BY HAVING THE CIRCLE OF TRUSTED ADULTS IN A PROMINENT PLACE IN YOUR HOME MAY MAKE THE PERPETRATOR THINK TWICE.



- ➔ Choosing a teacher as one should be encouraged as they are mandated for child safety and evidence shows children are more likely to disclose to a teacher compared to other adults.
- ➔ Update the trusted adults at least once per year, as the people may change, and teachers may move, also this is a great regular reminder to again discuss each part of your family safety plan with your children.
- ➔ Create a secret word or phrase that your child can use if they are in fear, and want to be picked up, or have concerns they want to discuss.
- ➔ If someone seems "too good to be true," ask more questions. Even a close friend or relative may not be a safe person to trust with your child.

4 SET CLEAR BOUNDARIES

- ➔ Let your children know that if they are uncomfortable being around a particular adult or older child, then you or another adult will let that person know this (e.g., tell them that you don't want your child to sit on their lap).
- ➔ Set clear family guidelines for personal privacy and behaviour. Discuss them with all members of your family.
- ➔ Discuss these guidelines with any other adults who spend time around or supervise the children (e.g., if a child does not want to hug or kiss someone hello or goodbye, then they can shake hands instead).

5 TALK ABOUT IT

- TALKING OPENLY IS ONE OF THE BEST PREVENTION METHODS, IT BREAKS DOWN BARRIERS AND REDUCES STIGMA. HAVE OPEN CONVERSATIONS WITH YOUR CHILDREN ABOUT THEIR BODY PARTS & BOUNDARIES.
- ➔ Be sure to mention that the abuser might be an adult friend, family member, or older youth.
 - ➔ Let everyone in the family know it is OK to ask questions. It is important for adults to set the tone for everyone by talking about the range of healthy sexual behaviours and speaking up about sexual abuse.
 - ➔ Talk to children in age appropriate ways about their bodies and boundaries. It also teaches them that they have the right to say "no." They become less vulnerable to people who would violate their boundaries, and are more likely to tell you if abuse occurs
 - ➔ Remember to teach children that their body belongs to them, they have a right to say no, and that they should tell a safe adult if they're upset or worried

6 KNOW WHERE TO REPORT & SEEK HELP AND ADVICE

- ➔ If you are concerned about the sexualised behaviours of a parent, step parent, cousin, sibling or other family member, care enough to talk with them, AND seek advice from a helpline.



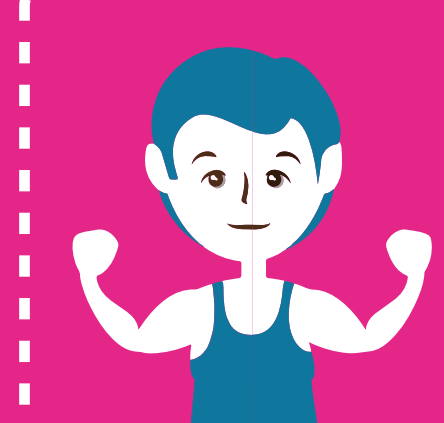
DON'T OVERREACT - When you react to disclosure with anger or disbelief, the child will likely: Feel even more ashamed and guilty, Shut down, Change or retract the story, when, in fact, abuse is actually occurring.

- ➔ **DISCLOSURE** (Listen!) of sexual abuse means a child has chosen you as the person he or she trusts enough to tell. It is the moment when children learn whether others can be trusted to stand up for them.

REMEMBER THAT VERY FEW REPORTED INCIDENTS OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE ARE FALSE, MOST CHILDREN DO NOT DISCLOSE FOR MANY YEARS, AND 1 IN 3 NEVER DISCLOSE



Believe the child and make sure the child knows it.



Thank the child for telling you and praise the child's courage.

Encourage the child to talk, but don't ask leading questions about details. Asking about details can alter the child's memory of events. If you must ask questions to keep the child talking, ask open-ended ones like "What happened next?"

Learn about the agencies in your area. Know who to contact to make a report if you know or suspect that a child has been sexually abused, or you are worried about someone's behaviour towards a child, you can report to helplines below:

CALL FOR INFORMATION, ADVICE OR IF YOU JUST WANT TO TALK

Prevent
ed
ABUSE PREVENTION EDUCATION

IF YOU SUSPECT ABUSE CALL NSPCC HELPLINE
0800 800 5000

IF YOU'RE A CHILD & WANT HELP CALL CHILDLINE
0800 1111

NNECA
NATIONAL NETWORK TO END CHILD ABUSE

WWW.NNECA.ORG.UK
WWW.CHILDABUSEHELP.ORG.UK

