



# BARRIERS TO SEEKING SUPPORT

This resource is designed to support families who have been affected by incidents of sexual abuse at King Street nursery. This will include families who know that their child was directly affected, and those who do not have certainty either way. Even if your child was not directly affected, or if you don't know whether they were, there is an emotional impact and it is very common to feel distressed; these reactions make sense given the context of what has happened.

*"One of the greatest wounds of trauma is the loss of connection"*  
Judith Herman

## **This resource will:**

- Acknowledge the complexity of different families' experiences.
- Explore (and normalise) some of the common reasons why it can feel difficult to reach out for support.
- Help you think about what support you might be ready for, if any, and what steps you might be able to take towards accessing this.

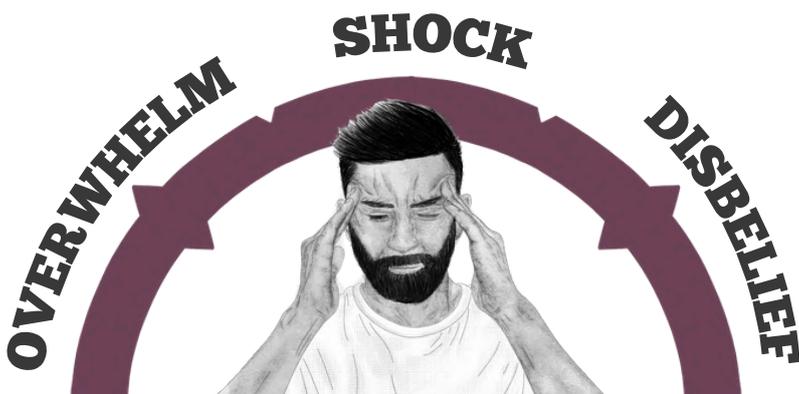
A nursery is meant to be a safe place where children are cared for, nurtured and protected. It is therefore deeply shocking when abuse occurs in these settings, and it represents a profound breach of trust. This can be incredibly destabilising and can affect how safe the world feels, how much you can trust professionals, and even how confident you feel as a parent.

For some, these intense feelings will naturally ease over time, especially for those who have a good support system around them. But, for others these feelings may persist or even worsen, and, when this happens, it is important to seek external, and sometimes professional support.

If you are finding it hard to seek support, remember you are not alone, many people feel this way, and there are understandable reasons why reaching out can feel difficult.

## COMMON BARRIERS TO SEEKING SUPPORT

Many families experience intense shock when they learn about abuse in a setting they trusted. Many describe feeling numb, confused or emotionally flooded. You may be focused on getting through each day, dealing with practical matters or protecting your child.



Some of the things we hear are:

- *I can't find words for how I feel*
- *If I talk about it, it might make me feel worse*
- *I feel stuck*
- *I don't want to be responsible for other people's reactions or end up supporting them*

When everything feels overwhelming, asking for help can feel like too much.

## SHAME, GUILT AND SELF-BLAME

It is very common to think:

- *I should have known*
- *I should have protected my child*
- *This is my fault for trusting/believing others*

These feelings can be incredibly strong, even though the responsibility sits with the person(s) who caused harm. Shame and self-blame often make parents or carers withdraw rather than reach out.

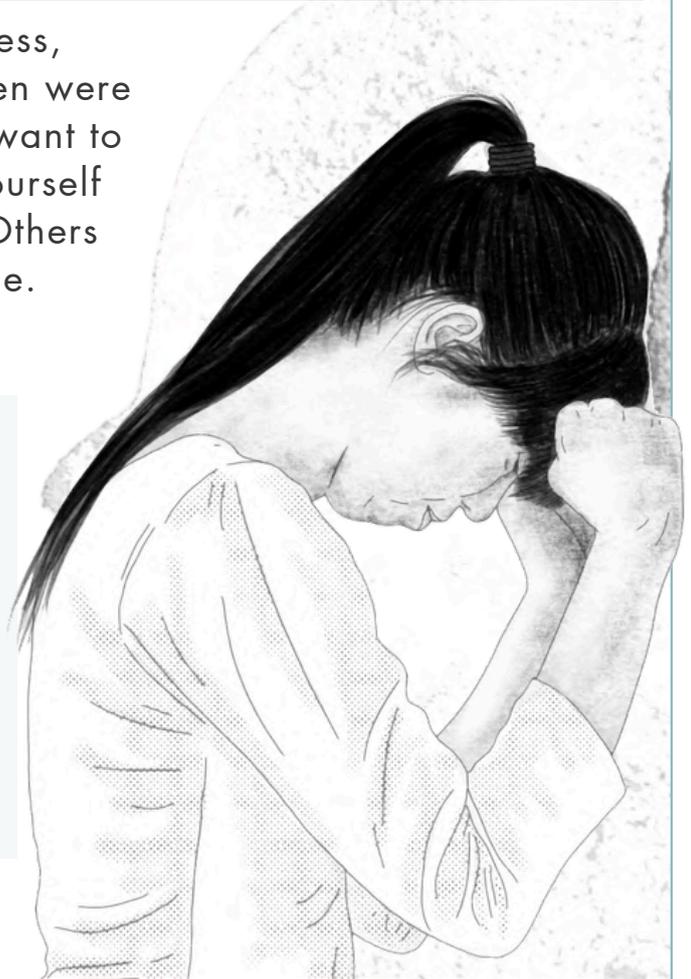
# MINIMISATION, COMPARISON AND DENIAL

Some people will minimise their own distress, especially if they believe that other children were 'more harmed'. It is also really human to want to reject what happened, to deny it or tell yourself that it couldn't possibly have happened. Others may feel they should be able to cope alone.

## Some of the things we hear are:

- *It didn't happen to my child so I don't deserve support*
- *Other families have it worse/need help more*
- *I don't want to think/talk about it – I just want to move on*
- *Maybe I'm overreacting*
- *We should be grateful*

This can stop people from asking for help, even when they are struggling.



# UNCERTAINTY

For families who do not know whether their child was harmed, uncertainty can be deeply distressing.

## Some of the things we hear are:

- *What if something happened that we don't know about?*
- *Am I imagining problems or being overly anxious?*

This uncertainty can make it difficult to justify seeking support, perhaps because they feel they may be dismissed or because they lack a clear reason.



# PROTECTING THE CHILD AND FAMILY

Some people avoid seeking support out of a strong need to protect their child and / or themselves from further distress or being labelled.

**Some of the things we hear are:**

- *I don't want everyone to know*
- *I don't want people to pity us/ my child*
- *I don't want/ I don't want my child to be treated differently*

This wanting to preserve a sense of normality and wanting to protect your child is a very natural response and can put some people off from seeking support.

## WORRY ABOUT BEING JUDGED

Some people fear being blamed, criticised or misunderstood by others.

**Some of the things we hear are:**

- *I don't want anyone to know*
- *People will judge me or blame me*
- *People will think I am a bad parent*
- *People will think I didn't do enough*
- *People will think I should be coping better*

These fears can make it feel safer to stay silent.

## FEELINGS OF HOPELESSNESS

**This can show up in thoughts including:**

- *Nothing can help, it's too awful*
- *Nobody can understand*
- *There's no point*
- *Everything is ruined*

If you are regularly experiencing these thoughts, it is likely a sign that support is important right now and validating these barriers can be a first step towards seeking support.

## DISTRUST OF PROFESSIONALS AND SYSTEMS

When abuse occurs in a professional setting, it can be very hard to trust other professionals again. This can make people feel torn between wanting help yet not trusting others. This can be deeply upsetting and add to the sense of needing to cope alone.

# DIFFERENT EXPERIENCES FOR DIFFERENT FAMILIES

## **If you know your child was abused**

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You may be coping with intense emotions such as anger, grief, fear or helplessness. On top of this you may be experiencing trauma responses such as feeling hypervigilant, or shut down. It may feel frightening to think about talking to someone in case it feels too much to tell the story again. At the same time you may be worrying about how these experiences will affect your child in the long run, if you are doing the right thing, and about how and when and what to tell your child.

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## **If you believe your child was not abused**

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Even with reassurance, many parents still feel shaken. You may feel guilty for feeling upset, you may worry about other children and / or struggle with trusting childcare again.

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## **If you don't know whether your child has been abused**

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Living with not knowing can be extremely hard. Many parents who have experienced this describe feeling constantly on edge, watching for signs, and doubting themselves. They also describe ongoing anxiety and intrusive thoughts.

It can feel difficult to explain this distress when there are no clear answers.

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# WHY SUPPORT MATTERS

All families impacted *in any way* by the current situation may benefit from professional support. What kind of support is 'just right' will of course vary depending on where you are in your own journey.

Support can help families feel confident they are on the right track, offer a confidential opportunity to make sense of emotions, rebuild trust in the world, strengthen relationships, and feel less alone with it all.

## THE SUPPORT YOU CAN EXPECT TO RECEIVE FROM BEACON HOUSE

### **We will:**

- Take your concerns seriously, and treat every concern equally
- Offer information that will help you to understand that your reactions are natural and understandable
- Be clear and honest about what support we can offer and what choices you have
- Go at your pace and keep support available over time
- Welcome your questions, and support you with decision making
- Give you the time to make choices about what feels right for you.

## WAYS TO GET IN TOUCH

Call us on 01444 413 838 or email us on [admin@beaconhouse.org.uk](mailto:admin@beaconhouse.org.uk)

We welcome your call, and you will be offered a time to speak to one of our team on the same day.

**Our service is completely independent from Partou, and no information will be shared with them.**

