

Stepping Stones

Supporting next steps after sibling sexual harm



NSPCC
‘Learning’

Information for
professionals

Stepping Stones is a free consultation, assessment and intervention service for children and families where there has been sibling sexual harm or abuse.

When sibling sexual harm or abuse has taken place, all members of the family will be impacted. It can feel as though their lives have completely changed. Stepping Stones is designed to be a safe space where all family members, if they wish, can explore their thoughts and feelings. We can also help the family and their wider network to think about what ongoing support is needed.

This service is delivered and run by the NSPCC, the leading children's charity. Our mission is to bring together people from across society to help keep children safe. That's why we create services that make local communities safer for children, and that help children recover from abuse so that it doesn't shape their future.



Who is it for?

We offer assessment sessions to all members of the family, including parents/carers, siblings involved in the sexual harm, and any other siblings in the family. We will offer individual sessions, and family members can also choose to join some sessions together.

Professionals can make a referral at an early stage. Where possible, a worker from our service can join early conversations with professionals soon after sibling sexual harm has been reported to the relevant agencies, such as children's services and police.

We think of 'siblings' as: 'children who grow up in the same family, whether they are stepchildren, foster children, adopted children, or birth children.' If you have any questions about our criteria, please contact us for an initial conversation about referrals.





We can accept referrals:

- * When at least one of the children is under 18 at the time of referral.
- * When the young person who has harmed was under the age of 18 at the time the sexual harm took place, and is under the age of 21 at the time of referral.
- * When there is an existing safety plan in place with the family. We can also support the network to review and refine safety plans.
- * For children and young people with learning difficulties, or where there are additional needs.
- * Whether or not the children involved are still living in the same home and whether or not they are having contact with each other.
- * When families agree to be referred, because we are a consent-based service.



We can't accept referrals:

- * When both young people are over 18 at the time of referral.
- * When the young person who has harmed was over 18 at the time the sexual harm took place, or is over 21 at the time of referral.
- * When there is no existing safety plan in place with the family.
- * When the family does not agree to be referred.

What happens during assessment sessions?

The assessment will include:

- * a professionals meeting;
- * a visit to the home (or homes if children are living apart) where practitioners can meet the young person/people involved; and
- * two* half-day assessment sessions for the whole family at the Camden NSPCC office.

*(*this may take place over more than two days, particularly if some family members do not want to attend together or it would not be safe to do so).*



Assessment sessions will focus on:

- * getting to know the family;
- * understanding what happened; and
- * exploring family members' views on what could be helpful to move forward.

Practitioners will work with children in a safe, therapeutic space and will aim to make them feel comfortable to express their thoughts and feelings. While we will ask to talk about things that may be uncomfortable, we will never make children talk about anything they don't want to.

Sessions could involve talking, playing games, creative arts activities, psychological questionnaires or screening tasks and structured interviews to understand attachment functioning. There will be options for joint and individual sessions for family members.

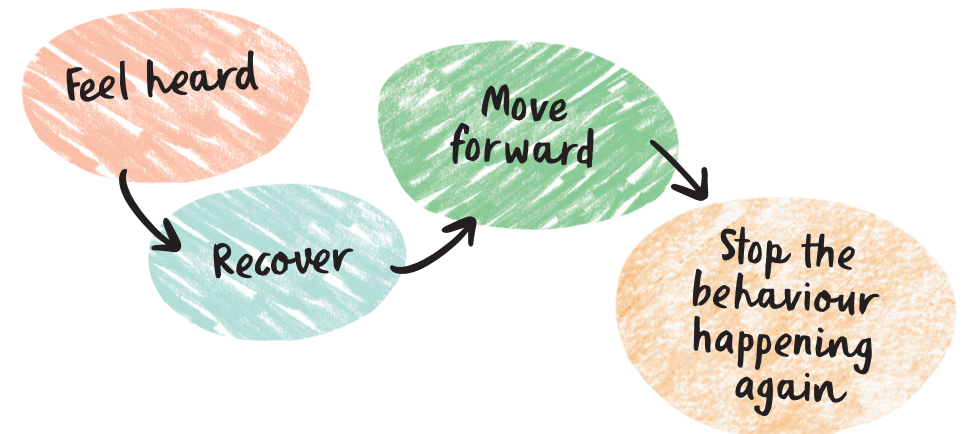


What are the aims of the service?

We want to understand:



Our assessments aim to identify what is needed for each person affected to:



What happens after the assessments?

After the assessment sessions, we will write a report with recommendations about next steps. The assessment may include a risk assessment using a recognised structured judgement tool (e.g. AIM3).

Recommendations might include:

- ongoing intervention sessions for some or all family members;
- alternative support for some or all family members; or
- ongoing professional consultation support to the professional network, or recommendations for the network to consider.



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