

**Children  
and young  
person's  
information  
booklet**



**Here, no  
matter  
what**

**Help after child  
sexual abuse**

Call us now on 0117 342 6999

Or email: [thebridge@uhbw.nhs.uk](mailto:thebridge@uhbw.nhs.uk)

[www.thebridgecanhelp.org.uk](http://www.thebridgecanhelp.org.uk)



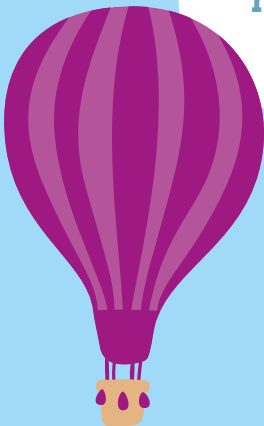
# **Welcome to the Bridge**

**A guide for  
young people age  
10 to 17 years**

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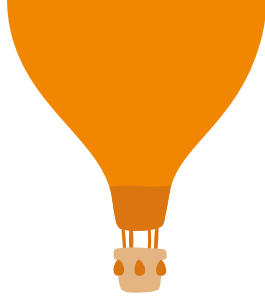
**We see young people at  
the Bridge when they tell  
us they have been sexually  
abused or when people  
are worried that they might  
have been sexually abused.**

**We are here to listen to  
you. We want to make  
sure that you are happy,  
healthy and safe.**



# So, what happens?

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Most young people come with a parent, carer or other trusted adult. You can choose who comes with you or sometimes come alone if you prefer. A police officer and social worker will also often accompany you.

When you arrive, a crisis worker will meet you and your carer if present and explain the process. You are in control. You can take breaks, skip a step or stop the consultation or examination at any time.

The Doctor or Nurse will introduce themselves. They may be dressed in special hygienic clothes. The Doctor or nurse will chat to you and ask a few questions. This can be done in private if you wish. These questions might cover topics such as; your medical background (any illness or medicines), any relationships you may have had, what home is like and whether you drink, smoke or take recreational drugs for example. We ask these questions to get to know what life is like for you. This is also a good opportunity to ask any questions you may have.

The examination usually starts with some basic health checks and a top to toe examination, if you are happy for the doctor or nurse to do this. In most cases it is not necessary to remove all your clothes or wear a gown. If you prefer, you can take one piece of clothing off at a time and put it back on before the next is taken off.

The doctor or nurse will then ask to examine your vagina or penis and bottom. During this nothing will be inserted or 'put inside' you without your permission and will only be done if we think it would be helpful to check for injuries or do tests. We usually have a good look using a magnifying light with a camera on it. This piece of equipment does not touch you. We might also ask to gently wipe you with a cotton bud swab to do some tests.

The check-up won't hurt and most young people describe it as a 'light touch', but if you're not comfortable just tell the doctor or nurse.

You can pause or stop the examination at any time and sometimes take the swabs yourselves.

After the examination you can take a shower and get changed (if you wish), and when you are ready, the doctor or nurse will ask you whether you would like to talk about the findings of the examination.

The next steps may include: taking blood (this may or may not occur on the same day); providing vaccinations; providing pregnancy testing or emergency contraception; talking about your mental health and wellbeing and being given advice and information about what will happen next; what other appointments or services may be helpful and answer any questions you may have.

# Thoughts and feelings you might have

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Below are some of the things you might be feeling now and you may feel in the future.

On the next page are some ideas to help with these things.

## Anger

You might feel angry with the person or people who did this and you may also feel angry with yourself or other people, including your family and friends. You might feel scared about how angry you feel.

## Guilt or shame

People often feel guilty or ashamed after what has happened. It is important to remember that guilt for what happened to you is with the person who did this and not you.

## Sadness

You might find that you feel really sad about what has happened. You might not know why you feel sad either. Sometimes you may feel sad because there have been a lot of changes or if some people aren't around anymore.

## Confusion

There are lots of reasons why you might feel confused after what has happened. Your memories might be a bit fuzzy or you might be having mixed feelings. These are normal responses to what has happened. Time can help with this and also talking to people can help too.

## Thoughts / memories you can't help thinking about

This includes nightmares and things called flashbacks. You might have lots of thoughts that you don't want about what happened while you are awake or in nightmares and it might be hard to make them stop. Flashbacks are memories which may feel very real like they are happening again. These can be very scary.

## Sleep problems

Finding it hard to sleep is normal after what has happened. Sleep is really important for our brains as this is when it gets a chance to organise and store our experiences. Exercise can help us to sleep better and trying to have a good routine can also help our body to find balance. A nice warm bath and a hot drink can help you to feel ready for sleep.

# Other resources that may be helpful are listed here

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## All services in the South West:

- The Survivors pathway: [www.survivorpathway.org.uk](http://www.survivorpathway.org.uk)

## Mental health & wellbeing:

- Off the Record: [www.otrbristol.org.uk](http://www.otrbristol.org.uk)
- Teens in Crisis: [www.ticplus.org.uk](http://www.ticplus.org.uk)
- On your Mind: [www.onyourmind.org.uk](http://www.onyourmind.org.uk)
- National Male Survivor Helpline: 0808 800 5005
- Young Minds Crisis Messenger: Text 'YM' to **85258**

## Relationships:

- [www.disrespectnobody.co.uk](http://www.disrespectnobody.co.uk)

## Online safety:

- [www.thinkuknow.co.uk](http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk)

## Sexual health & wellbeing:

- [www.brook.org.uk](http://www.brook.org.uk)
- [www.unitysexualhealth.co.uk](http://www.unitysexualhealth.co.uk)



Here are some ideas that might be able to help you feel calm and safe and help with the feelings mentioned on the previous page.

**Listen to a song you like** (or remember the words to a song that makes you smile)



**Imagine your favourite place**



**Think of things you like and write a list of them**



**Talk to a friend/teacher/loved one**

**Do something fun or sporty!**



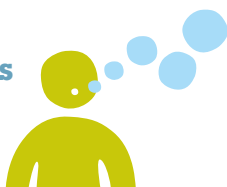
**Squeeze something** (slime, stress ball, bubble wrap or a stuffed toy)



**Make up a game**  
e.g. name animals alphabetically (ant, bumble bee, cat, dog...)

**Breathing techniques**

(like blowing out candles or using tools e.g. blowing bubbles)

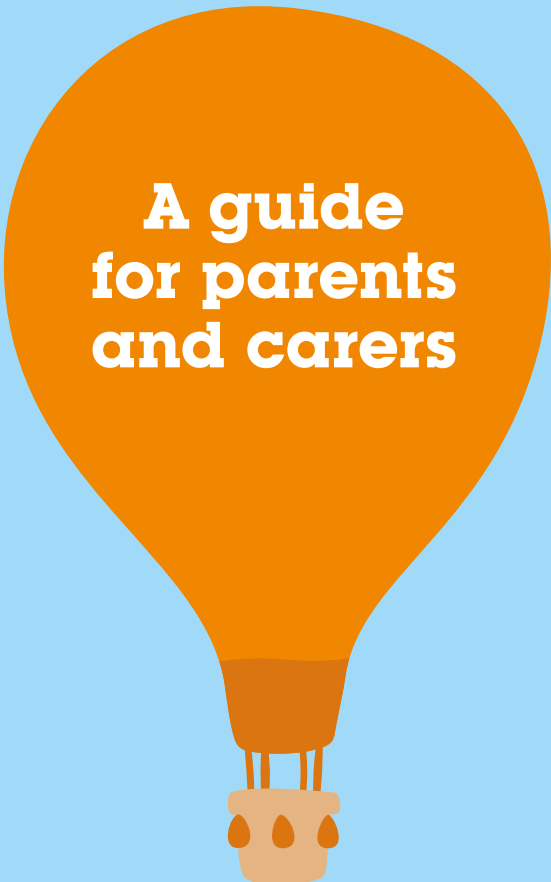


**Make a tool kit with your favourite coping skills** (bubbles, fidget spinner, song, smell etc)



**Write down/draw how you are feeling**

You could start a journal to help you understand your thoughts and feelings and feel more in control



**A guide  
for parents  
and carers**



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# Supporting resources for parents, carers and siblings

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**MOSAC:** [www.mosac.org.uk/resources/information-sheets](http://www.mosac.org.uk/resources/information-sheets)

**The parents' guide from the Somerset Phoenix project:**  
[www.somersetphoenixproject.org.uk](http://www.somersetphoenixproject.org.uk)

**NAPAC:** <https://napac.org.uk>

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## Messages children need to hear

**'You are not going crazy'**

**'You are strong'**

**'It's not your fault'**



# As a parent or carer what can I do to help?

- Make sure the abuse or other trauma has stopped - other professionals will help you with this
- Continue to build a relationship, by being honest, reliable and doing what you say you will do
- Have a reasonable understanding of trauma see [www.somersetphoenixproject.org.uk/for-parents-and-carers/understanding-trauma](http://www.somersetphoenixproject.org.uk/for-parents-and-carers/understanding-trauma)
- Help them feel safe through nurture, structure and support
- Stay calm and well yourself
- Try to encourage a broad range of friendships in & out of school/nursery
- Keep an eye out for bullying or unhelpful relationships
- Talk openly about what makes a healthy or unhealthy relationship in an age appropriate way
- Encourage activities that were previously enjoyed – or new ones

# Remember

- **Sexual abuse can happen to anyone's child** – however caring, protective, or well-informed parents are
- **There are often no warning signs for parents** – in fact, quite the opposite
- **You have an important role in your child's recovery**



**If you care for or are a professional looking after a child with communication needs then please use these easy read prompts to help you explain to them what will happen at the Bridge**



Here at the Bridge we have friendly people who are good at looking after children.

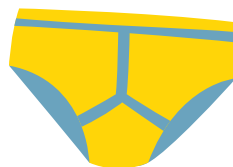
You can bring who you like with you



We have special doctors who are good at looking after children who have been hurt and knowing about 'private parts' or your vagina or penis



The doctor will ask if they can look at your body over from head to toe, making sure everything looks okay



The doctor will ask to look at your private parts with a special light



You can choose what parts of the examination you do and don't want and say '**no**' or '**stop**' at anytime

You can also access the children's passport, designed for children with disabilities. The aim of the passport is to provide our staff with extra information about your child before a visit. Please click **here** if you are reading this online or you can ring us and we will send a copy.

# How to find us

We are on the **2nd floor** of the **Central Health Clinic, Tower Street, Bristol BS2 0JD.**

We are south of Castle Park, about 20 minutes walk through Broadmead from the main Bristol Royal Infirmary site. The main entrance is from Passage Street (just off the A4044).

If you are reading this booklet on-line, click the map below for our location on google maps.

**By Car:** The entrance is off Passage Street.

**By Rail:** Bristol Temple Meads is a 10 minute walk or 5 minute taxi journey.

**By Bus:** We are a 10 minute walk from Bristol Bus & Coach Station located on Marlborough Street.

**By Bike:** There is a bike stand outside Central Clinic where bikes can be locked.

**Parking information:** Children or young people, their carers and supporting professionals can park outside. Please come up to The Bridge and we will supply a permit.

**Wifi information:** Available for free as **UHB-Guest**

