

Supporting Young Victims of Crime

LISTEN, SUPPORT, EMPOWER



**TRUSTED
YOUTH ALLIES**
LISTEN, SUPPORT, EMPOWER

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INTRODUCTION

It can be challenging when young people become victims of crime, and as professionals working with them, it's important to provide the necessary support.

This booklet offers guidance on how to help young victims cope with the aftermath of a crime, understand their rights, and access appropriate resources. The advice provided here is based on the experiences and insights of experts in the field.



Understanding the impact of crime on young victims is essential for professionals working with them. Crime can lead to significant emotional and psychological consequences, affecting their wellbeing and mental health. This recognition is vital for providing effective support. The emotional distress, psychological trauma, and other effects of crime can disrupt a young person's daily life, leading to social isolation and potential long-term consequences.

Professionals should approach their role with sensitivity and empathy, offering tailored support, referrals for therapy or counselling, and early intervention when needed. Recognising signs of unhealthy coping mechanisms and addressing them promptly is crucial to help young victims overcome crime victimisation.

BUILDING TRUST AND COMMUNICATION



Establish trust

Create a safe and non-judgmental space where young victims feel comfortable discussing their experiences and emotions.

Active listening

Develop active listening skills to better understand their needs and concerns.

Empathetic responses

Show empathy and validate their feelings, reassuring them that their emotions are valid and normal.



COPING STRATEGIES

Teaching coping skills

Provide young victims with strategies to manage their emotions and reduce the impact of trauma.



Breathing and relaxation techniques

Teach simple yet effective techniques such as deep breathing exercises or progressive muscle relaxation. These methods can help regulate emotions and reduce anxiety.

Psychoeducation

Begin by providing information about the normal emotional responses to trauma. This helps young victims understand that their reactions are valid and not uncommon.



Mindfulness and grounding exercises

Introduce mindfulness practices to help young victims stay present and focused. Grounding exercises, such as describing sensory experiences or focusing on an object, can be particularly useful.



Physical activity

Encourage regular physical activity as a means of releasing built-up tension and promoting overall well-being. Exercise has been shown to have positive effects on mental health.

Social support

Emphasise the importance of leaning on friends, family, or support groups. Healthy connections can provide a crucial support system during difficult times.

Expressive arts therapies

Explore creative outlets like art, music, or writing as ways for young victims to express their emotions non-verbally. This can be especially beneficial for those who may find it challenging to articulate their feelings.



SELF-CARE

Defining self-care

Clearly define self-care as a fundamental practice for maintaining mental and emotional wellbeing. Emphasise that prioritising one's own needs is not selfish but an essential aspect of sustaining overall health.



Seeking professional of peer supervision

Emphasise the value of seeking professional supervision or consultation, especially when dealing with challenging cases. Having a support network within the professional community serves as a preventive measure against burnout.

Recognise signs of secondary trauma

Check-in with yourself whether you are experiencing emotional exhaustion, reduced empathy, and decreased job satisfaction. Encourage them to seek help when needed and emphasise that acknowledging and addressing burnout is an essential aspect of maintaining effectiveness in their roles.

Encouraging personal hobbies and interests

Remind young victims to engage in activities they enjoy. Explore those with them. Pursuing hobbies provides a healthy outlet for stress and fosters a sense of personal fulfilment.




Establishing healthy boundaries

Teach the significance of setting healthy boundaries, both in personal and professional relationships. This includes knowing when to assert oneself, saying no when necessary, and recognising individual limits to prevent emotional exhaustion.



Regular self-check-ins

Encourage young victims to conduct regular self-check-ins. Prompt them to reflect on their emotional states and take proactive steps when they notice signs of distress. This practice empowers them to actively manage their wellbeing.



Whilst supporting others, make sure you are looking after yourself

Mindfulness and relaxation techniques

Introduce mindfulness and relaxation exercises for stress management. Techniques such as deep breathing, meditation, or taking brief breaks during the workday can be effective in maintaining emotional balance.

You cannot help someone else if you're not feeling well. This applies to supporting young victims as well, including noticing your own limits, emotional reactions, and your own needs.


PROVIDING INFORMATION AND RESOURCES



Scan the barcode for information on the victims code for under 18's

Legal support

In situations where legal assistance is necessary, connect young victims with experienced legal professionals who specialise in supporting victims. Legal experts can guide them through the complexities of the legal system, ensuring their rights are upheld.



Emphasise the importance of emotional support during legal proceedings.

Ensuring emotional support

Whether it's attending police interviews, court hearings, or meetings with legal professionals, having someone by their side can alleviate anxiety and enhance their ability to participate effectively in the legal process.

Guidance through the legal process

Provide clear and accessible information about the criminal justice process, outlining the stages involved and the potential outcomes.

This empowers young victims to navigate the legal journey with a greater understanding of what to expect.

Accompaniment to legal proceedings

Recognise the emotional challenges young victims may face when attending legal proceedings. Offer to accompany them during these processes, providing not only emotional support but also helping them feel more secure and informed throughout the often-intimidating legal environment.



Clarifying their role

Clearly define the role young victims play in the legal proceedings. Educate them on how their input is valued, and how their perspectives contribute to the justice system. This understanding can empower them to actively engage in the legal process.

Providing resources

Supply information and resources that explain legal terms, processes, and available support services. Accessible resources can help demystify the legal system and assist young victims in making informed decisions about their involvement.



Encouraging questions

Create an environment where young victims feel comfortable asking questions about the legal process. Ensuring they understand each step can alleviate confusion and empower them to make informed choices about their participation.

Maintaining regular communication

Establish open and regular communication channels with young victims throughout legal proceedings. This ensures they stay informed about the progress of their case and allows for any concerns or questions to be addressed promptly.



REPORTING AND PREVENTION

ENCOURAGE REPORTING: EMPHASISING THE IMPORTANCE OF SPEAKING OUT

Building trust in reporting

Stress the significance of reporting crimes to law enforcement as a crucial step towards justice. Emphasise that reporting can help prevent further harm and protect not only the victim but also others who might be at risk.



Empowering young voices

Encourage young victims to recognise the power of their voice in shaping the response to the crime. Reporting is an essential tool for holding offenders accountable and ensuring that the legal system addresses their experiences.

Providing information

Offer clear and accessible information about the reporting process. Help young victims understand what to expect, how their report will be handled, and the support available to them throughout the reporting journey.



Ensuring confidentiality

Highlight measures taken to protect the confidentiality of those reporting crimes. Assure young victims that steps will be taken to respect their privacy while still ensuring a thorough and effective investigation.

Legal support during reporting

If needed, connect young victims with legal professionals who can provide guidance and support during the reporting process. Having legal assistance can empower them to navigate potential challenges and concerns.



Create a safe and non-judgmental space where young victims feel comfortable discussing their experiences and emotions



PREVENTION: PROMOTING PERSONAL SAFETY AND STRATEGIES TO AVOID VICTIMISATION

Discussing personal safety

Engage in open conversations about personal safety with young victims. Discuss the importance of situational awareness, trusting instincts, and recognising potential risks in various environments.




Empowering with knowledge

Educate young victims on strategies to prevent further victimisation. This includes understanding patterns of potential harm, recognising manipulation tactics, and establishing boundaries to protect their wellbeing.

Digital safety

In the modern age, emphasise the significance of digital safety. Discuss the potential risks online, the importance of privacy settings, and strategies for navigating social media safely.



Being there to listen and support can make the biggest difference

Encouraging healthy relationships

Promote the importance of cultivating healthy relationships. Discuss red flags of toxic relationships, emphasise the value of mutual respect, and encourage open communication as a preventive measure against victimisation.

Self-defense strategies

Provide information on self-defense strategies for physical and emotional well-being. This includes both physical self-defense techniques and strategies for assertive communication in challenging situations.

Community engagement

Encourage community engagement as a means of fostering a supportive environment. Active community involvement can create networks of protection and support, reducing the likelihood of victimisation.



Support networks

Stress the importance of building strong support networks. Encourage young victims to connect with friends, family, and community resources that can provide ongoing support and guidance.

VISIT FOR AVAILABLE RESOURCES

Familiarise yourself
with available
resources



SafeCall: free helpline and support service for those affected by missing, county lines and criminal exploitation



Victim support



Catch 22: county line support and rescue service



Metropolitan Police Victim Information Leaflet



London Victim and Witness Service



Metropolitan Police Support for Victims and Witnesses of Crime