



Call for Content



FESTIVAL OF ACTIVISM
AGAINST CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

18th March 2025, Watershed Bristol

#BeyondTherapyFest25



Background

Beyond Therapy is about re-imagining society's response to child sexual abuse through research, creativity, and connection.

In 2024, 500,000 children and young people will experience sexual abuse in England and Wales. This problem continues to be hidden and taboo. Most will never access support, and those that do face significant challenges in finding justice or access to a service that feels right for them. The system of agencies designed to support children and families is all too often fragmented and overwhelmed.

Children, young people, and families have told us that they need a different response. A response that can help them to rebuild their lives and create change for others who have shared this experience. In answer to this, we created the Beyond Therapy Festival which combines arts, activism, and research so that we can challenge attitudes toward child sexual abuse and re-imagine society's existing response.

2025 Theme:

Mental Health

Each year the festival highlights a key area chosen by young people and families with lived experience in The Green House network. This year's theme is mental health.

One of the greatest challenges of learning to live life alongside experiences of sexual abuse is managing the mental health impacts. Every day, young victims and survivors navigate trauma symptoms like anxiety, depression, and PTSD – all too often on their own.

Currently, mental health care services focus on the medicalisation of trauma experiences; some are not appropriately trauma-informed, too short term, and too often accompanied by a long wait to talk to someone individually. Outside of specialist services, practitioners worry about responding to disclosures of abuse and how to support survivors.

Yet the latest research says that the type of support provided isn't what makes the biggest difference – it's about choice. This could be different needs at different times - a long-term talking therapy, a creative group, learning boxing or how to play the drums really loud! Healing is found in building relationships of trust, and connecting people with shared experiences together can be as beneficial in creating change as one-to-one therapy.

Our 2025 Beyond Therapy Festival will explore what healing means. Join us, as we bring together young survivor voices with the latest research and best practice and creative responses, so that we can consider together what effective community support for mental health looks like.



Exploring our festival theme

Our festival explores how we can build support for mental health following experiences of sexual abuse.



To understand our approach, you can watch the video of last year's festival by clicking [here](#).

Content for panel discussions and workshops should reflect key areas within our festival theme identified by young people and families:



Mental health & sexual exploitation



Improving mental health policy and systems



Health & justice



Anger & healing



Peer support – by survivors, parents and carers and by those that love them



Inclusive community spaces for sexual abuse survivors' mental health



Ideas for key themes raised by young people and families for content:

- Recognising what trauma is – misrecognition and misdiagnosis of PTSD and C-PTSD, harmful misdiagnoses, recognising the impact is both short-term and long-term.
- Discussion of trauma is increasingly mainstream – in what ways is this helping survivors and what ways is it not? E.g. does increased knowledge help everyone? Does trauma get minimised as an everyday term?
- Anger and revenge - “No justice, no peace” - what does wellness look like in the absence of justice? What does social and personal justice look like when the criminal justice system fails, and how can this be cultivated?
- School support – what does effective support in the education system look like for young people impacted by sexual trauma? How can schools help keep young people in education where trauma gets in the way?
- Child Sexual Exploitation – poor mental health as a vulnerability and a consequence. What are the specific needs around healing for CSE survivors? What kinds of approaches are working well? Support and access – what does effective mental health support look like? How available is it for young people? What needs improving?
- Building a toolkit – sharing ways of resourcing ourselves, and of building confidence and competence in the ordinary support you can give to your loved ones
- Self-harm and sexual violence - building a different relationship to risk and to self.
- Parenting/caring and mental health – what challenges are coming up for families around supporting children and young people with poor mental health following abuse? What are helpful learnings around relationship, risk and building post-traumatic growth?

About the festival

The festival will be held at Watershed, Bristol on the 18th March 2025 for around 300 attendees. The event will be open to the public and we expect an audience of researchers, practitioners, survivors, and anyone interested in learning more or becoming an ally.

The day is made up of a programme of panel discussions and practice-based workshops, interwoven with the creative responses of young survivors and families.

Please share this call for content with anyone you think might be interested in contributing.

We are planning this day to be a positive, creative, and joyful space focussed on the needs of young people and families – the Festival of Activism is an inclusive community-based response to child sexual abuse.

Our call to community partners

We invite our community to contribute content to our Festival of Activism. We ask applicants to consider the following questions:

Question:

What does mental wellbeing mean for young people following experiences of child sexual abuse?

What jeopardises it, what supports it and what changes are needed by services and communities?

Applicants can contribute content to our festival in two ways:

1 Design and deliver a panel discussion

2 Run a practice-based workshop

We can offer panellists and workshop facilitators:

- ✓ A pre-meet with the festival team before the day
- ✓ On-site technical support
- ✓ Emotional support with The Green House therapy team on the day and after the festival.
- ✓ A small fee of £120 per contributor for the delivery of panels and workshops plus travel expenses (outside of Avon & Somerset)
- ✓ Dedicated volunteers to help coordinate your panel/workshop on the day

How To Apply

Our call is open between **Friday 8th November** and **Monday 9th December 2024**.

You can submit content for the festival in three ways:

1 Complete the relevant Online Form:
→ **Panel** → **Workshop**

Or...

2 Complete the Word document form found on **our website** for a Panel/Workshop and email it to **meg.gibson@the-green-house.org.uk**

Or...

3 Email us a short video (no more than 5 minutes) describing the content of your Panel or Workshop (please answer all the questions from the **word document form** in your video) and share your video via WeTransfer or Google Drive link to **meg.gibson@the-green-house.org.uk**.

Key Dates

Please submit your entry by **10am** on **Monday 9th December 2024**.

We will follow up with all applicants the week commencing 16th December 2024 and if successful, set up an informal meeting with you to ensure the scope of content and style of presentation is in line with the festival themes.

If you would like this information in a different format or if you would like to discuss the opportunity before applying, please contact our Festival Director, Thea Woodrow, at **thea.woodrow.davies@the-green-house.org.uk**.

Call guidance and further information

Panel Discussions

Contributors are invited to curate panel discussions of up to five people (including a Chair or Co-Chairs) on themes related to our call. Panels should include a diverse range of expertise, representing research, practice, and survivor voice. We are looking for engaging and inspiring panels of around 1 hour 15 minutes (allowing for at least 15 minutes of questions). Panels should focus

broadly on the festival themes and aim to share with the audience the expertise of panellists as part of a conversation – rather than PowerPoint presentations. As part of the panel, we welcome short creative contributions from panellist such as poetry readings, films, digital artworks or music. See the example Panel description below for the kind of format we're looking for.

Workshops

Workshop spaces are dedicated to skills exchange and should be practice-based. We want our festival attendees to experience what an effective mental health response to child sexual abuse looks like day-to-day. Workshop spaces are ideal for practitioners and survivors with creative arts expertise that could be transferred into educational settings e.g., art therapy, music therapy, peer

support skills, trauma-informed yoga. Workshops can also focus on skills exchange for practitioners working in the sexual violence sector (e.g., consent-based training, handling disclosures). Workshops will run for around an hour and should be facilitated by two people. See the example workshop description below for the kind of format required.

Examples

Panel example

Keeping secrets: Is the criminal justice system perpetuating silence?

In 2021, rape prosecutions and convictions in England and Wales hit a record-breaking low. Everyday survivors who report to the police are being told they can't have therapy while the criminal case is ongoing - this simply is not true. As it currently stands survivors cannot get justice or access mental health support. Why? We guide the audience through the criminal justice journey, from report to court and how to find pre-

trial therapy services along the way. Panellists discuss the ways the system is letting us down, what needs to change to make the system work and how to improve access to care. The panel includes QC (Chair), Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) Manager, Researcher, Detective Inspector RASSO, Crown Prosecution Service Prosecutor, CEO of Independent Sexual Violence Advisor Service, Pre-trial therapist/clinician.

Workshop example

Connection through creativity: a writing workshop for sexual abuse

[Name of workshop leader] is a creative arts therapist and *[Name of workshop leader]* an award-winning poet. They will be reflecting on how they work in creative ways in a clinical setting with children/young people who have experienced sexual abuse. They guide you through activities run in their groups, sharing simple evidence-based techniques designed to build compassion, self-belief, and resilience through the art of creative writing. Participants are encouraged to bring a notepad and pen. Suitable for all attendees.