

About Us

The Green House is a registered charity based in Bristol. We have been providing specialist counselling for people affected by sexual abuse for over 30 years. Our services support over 75 men, women, children and young people each week.



“The experience I have had at The Green House has really increased my understanding of my feelings and how my past experience was affecting my present. It has given me the tools I need to make a practical difference to my life”

The Green House client

How we help

Our highly skilled therapists offer up to 24 sessions of free and confidential counselling. This enables survivors to process their trauma and explore their emotions and ways of coping. Having a safe space to talk can truly make a difference to people being able to move forward with their lives.

Our children and young people’s team use a range of creative approaches, such as art and drama therapy. It can often be difficult to articulate difficult memories and experiences but the use of art, drama and play enables children and young people to process their feelings and trauma in accessible, non-threatening ways.

Key statistics about sexual abuse

- 1 in 6 children in the UK aged 11-17 years have experienced some form of sexual abuse.
- Nearly half a million adults in England and Wales are sexually assaulted each year.
- 1 in 5 women aged 16 - 59 have experienced some form of sexual violence since the age of 16.
- People who have been sexually abused as children can be at greater risk of sexual abuse as adults. For example, 35% of women who have experienced childhood sexual abuse go on to be victims of sexual violence as adults.

The impact of sexual abuse

Experiences of sexual abuse cause severe trauma and deep emotional, physical and psychological stress. This can impact people in lots of different ways, including:

The way you think

Trying to understand the abuse can be very confusing and often people can end up blaming themselves for what happened. Individuals can experience flashbacks, nightmares, panic attacks or sleeping difficulties and may find it difficult to concentrate or make decisions.

The way you feel

Experiences of abuse can cause people to feel fearful, angry, helpless, ashamed, anxious, and depressed. Individuals who have experienced sexual abuse are 15 times more likely to suffer from mental health problems and 40% of survivors experience Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

The way you behave

Living with trauma can impact the way people cope and manage their lives. The risk of suicide in those who have been sexually abused is twice as high compared with the general population. 57% of The Green House clients reported that they had a problem with drugs or alcohol, often using them as a way to cope.

Jemma's story

Eight year old Jemma came for therapy after she was sexually assaulted by her 16 year old cousin. The incident had left Jemma confused about her relationships and why she couldn't see her cousin anymore. Jemma appeared timid and shy during her initial therapy sessions. She carefully made drawings and was very well-behaved. Jemma's mother and the teaching staff at school painted Jemma in a very different light and described her as disruptive, difficult to manage and isolated from her peer group.



Jemma often brought companions with her into therapy, teddies and dolls - '*friends*' she called them who helped her feel safe. An important theme in her sessions was around teddy having to go to hospital after he had a nasty accident. Jemma, her therapist and the other dolls represented doctors and nurses at the hospital and each of them had a role to play in making sure teddy was '*fixed*' and got better again. There was a sense of relief felt from all the characters when the doctor told teddy he could go home to his family and that he'd be ok.

When children are subjected to sexual abuse or assault often there are no lasting physical signs that something has taken place or that they have been hurt. Communicating their hurt to others can therefore feel more difficult because the hurt cannot necessarily be seen in a physical way. Jemma was trying to make sense of this through teddy's visits to the hospital, using this scenario as a metaphor for her own hurt as a result of the sexual assault she suffered. The fact that teddy got better and was able to go home again provided Jemma with the hope that she too could recover from what happened.

Over the course of her therapy Jemma became more animated and confident. She was able to show her therapist the hurt, angry and vulnerable parts of herself which at the beginning of the work had remained hidden. Acknowledging these feelings made it possible for her to process what had happened.

In her later therapy sessions Jemma moved from metaphorical play to talking directly about her older cousin and asking questions about what would happen to him because he '*hurt me*'. Towards the end of the work Jemma and her therapist were able to think about her relationship with her cousin and how this had been affected by what happened and about relationships in a more general sense. As a result of her time at The Green House Jemma's mother and her school teachers reported that she had started joining in playing with children her own age and more settled behaviour at home and at school.

Our impact

Last year we provided 2,597 hours of counselling for 136 women, 76 men, and 74 children. The profound impact this had for them included:

- 93% of women reported a positive change in their mental and physical wellbeing at the end of therapy
- 73% of men reported a positive change in their mental and physical wellbeing at the end of therapy
- 77% of adult clients reported they were better able to manage their relationships
- 64% of children and young people who finished therapy reported an increase in their health and wellbeing
- Children and young people had a 100% reported improvement in the way they could relate to others