

Case Study

Emma is a 19 year old autistic woman who you are working with. Emma attends a group you facilitate in the local college. Emma became upset in your group today. After the group she disclosed that she has experienced sexual abuse but says she can't talk about it and doesn't know if she can come back to the group.

You check out with Emma what support she has and if she has family support nearby. She gets upset and starts talking very fast and says that isn't an option to speak to them. She discloses that she cannot get support from people at home and doesn't want to tell you anymore.

She goes onto say that she is really struggling at the moment, she feels very anxious all of the time and that she doesn't feel safe.

Things to Consider

How can you make Emma feel confident about this disclosure and continue to come to your group?

LISTEN: You can offer to find a quiet space to talk and a private environment. Does Emma have any sensory needs to consider when finding a space?

ASK: Take things slowly and to find out more about why Emma feels unsafe. It is important to try to find out if Emma is in any immediate danger. You could ask:

‘Are you safe at home?’

‘Are you safe within your relationship?’

‘Does anyone make you do things with them that you don’t want to do?’

‘Does anyone hurt you?’

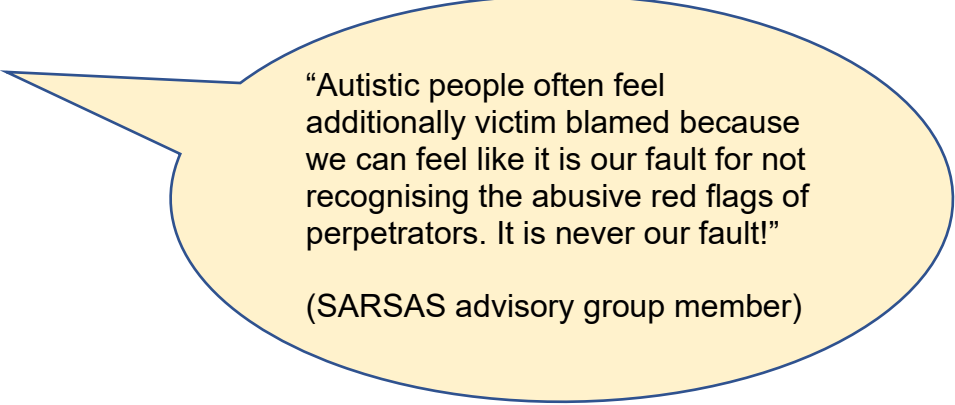
BELIEVE: You can tell Emma that you believe her.

RESPOND: Reassure Emma that she is brave to have told you. Ask if she would like to talk about her options?

SUPPORT: Signpost or with Emma’s consent make a referral to specialist support services. Can you give Emma helpline numbers? Do you need to support Emma to put these numbers in her phone or write them down for her?

EXPLAIN: Do you need to make a safeguarding referral? Do you need to explain to Emma what happens next and who you need to tell?

FOLLOW UP: Arrange a time to speak with Emma again, this could be after the next group. Find out how she is and if there is any more support you can provide. Write down and store securely what you have been told. If you feel Emma is at risk, seek urgent advice from your Manager or Safeguarding lead and decide together whether there is an immediate need to safeguard.



“Autistic people often feel additionally victim blamed because we can feel like it is our fault for not recognising the abusive red flags of perpetrators. It is never our fault!”

(SARSAS advisory group member)