

Worksheet 11

Grooming Exercise – Understanding How Abuse Happens Gradually

This exercise is practitioner-led and uses discussion and reflection rather than a written format. It is suitable for Session 5 and Session 5A. Adapt language for POC (adult) or Y-POC (young person) as appropriate.

What is grooming? (Explain in plain language)

Grooming is the process by which a person – an adult or a young person – gradually gains the trust of a child, their family and the people around them so they can create opportunities to cause harm. It can look like kindness, friendship or love. It is planned, even if it does not feel that way to the person experiencing it.

The stages of grooming – read through and discuss each step:

Stage	What it looks like	Did I notice this? (yes / no / not sure)

Suggested stages to pre-fill for discussion: 1. Targeting a child who appears vulnerable or lonely; 2. Building trust and friendship with the child and family; 3. Establishing one-to-one contact and eroding boundaries; 4. Gradually introducing sexual topics or physical contact; 5. Creating secrecy ('this is just between us'); 6. Maintaining control through guilt, shame or threats.

Warning signs the caregiver recognises now, looking back:

Why children often do not tell – barriers to disclosure (discuss and record):

☐ Fear of not being believed	☐ Shame or embarrassment
☐ Love or loyalty to the person	☐ Fear of consequences for themselves or family
☐ They were threatened	☐ They did not understand what was happening was wrong
☐ They had been told it was normal	☐ They did not have the words to explain it

What children need from a protective adult when they want to tell:

How I can make it easier for my children to come to me:

In an emergency, or if you or a child are in immediate danger, always call the emergency services.