



# Staying SAFER in the UK

*An information booklet on sexual abuse and sexual assault for asylum seeking children and young people*

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### ***What is this booklet about and who should read it?***

This booklet is for children and young people who have come to Britain seeking asylum, especially for those who arrive without a parent or other adult carer. It is for children and young people aged 11 years and older.

Firstly, welcome to Britain. It is sad that you could not stay safely in your home country. Although life there may have been difficult, you may find it hard to adapt to living here at first. You will have to learn the English language and about the British way of life too. Also being new here, you may not know about the problems you could face or the help you could get.

Most of the people you meet here in Britain will be good and kind and you will be able to trust them. However, like anywhere in the world there are people who do bad things. In particular, there may be people who want to sexually abuse or sexually assault you. This booklet tells you what this means. It also tells you about things that can increase the risk of sexual abuse and assault and how to get help to stop it happening. It tells you what you can do if it happens to you. ***Although we do not want to worry you, it can help to know about the risks you may face and about the people who can help you.***

### ***What is sexual abuse and sexual assault?***

Sexual abuse is when someone does something sexual to another person without the other person wanting it, or really knowing what is happening. It can be things like a person's body or private parts being touched in a sexual way, or someone being made to watch sexual films. Some abusers give children and young people gifts or favours to get them to do sexual things. Sexual assault includes rape and other sexual acts often done in a violent way. These kinds of things may have happened to you, or people you knew in your home country. Sadly, it happens here too, to boys as well as girls. ***Sexual abuse and sexual assault can cause harm to children and young people. You have a right to be protected from it.***

### ***What is the law in Britain on sex, and sexual abuse and assault?***

Here in Britain it is within the law to have sex with others of the same or opposite sex if both are aged 16 or over, and if both agree to it. It is against the law for adults to do anything sexual to children aged under 16 years (17 in Northern Ireland). This includes things that do not involve touch. It is also against the law for adults who work with children, such as teachers to do sexual things with those they care for aged under 18 years. ***Whatever your age, you have the right to say 'no' to doing sexual things with others, whoever they are.***

### ***Who might sexually abuse or assault you?***

Although it is mostly males who sexually abuse children, some females do it too. Most sexual abusers choose boys or girls who are younger than they are, or who are weaker in some way. Some abuse others who are the same age or older. Sometimes people who look after children, or who work with them, sexually abuse them. ***Although all kinds of people sexually abuse or assault children, most do not. Most adults would want to protect you from it if they knew you were at risk.***

### ***Why might you be at risk of sexual abuse or assault?***

You are likely to feel lonely here without your family, especially in the first few months. Because of this, you may need a lot of care, attention, and practical help. You may especially want it from older people from your home country who know your way of life and language. This can put you at risk of sexual abuse. Other things that can increase the risk are being young, female and new to Britain. Not knowing the dangers of sexual abuse and assault or of your right to protection can also increase the risk. ***It is best to meet new friends in public places where you are safe until you are sure you can trust them.***

### ***How might you know when you are at risk of sexual abuse or assault?***

You may meet someone for example, who makes you feel uneasy by how they look at you, or how they treat you. An older person may seem too friendly and give you many gifts, or do lots of nice things for you. Groups of boys or young men may gather near where you live and say sexual things to you, or try to touch you. ***Trust your feelings if you feel someone intends to sexually abuse or assault you. It is better to be safe than sorry.***

### ***What should you do if you feel at risk of sexual abuse or assault?***

People who want to sexually abuse or assault children are less likely to do it if they know it will not be kept a secret. This is why if you feel at risk of sexual abuse or assault, it is important to tell a trusted adult. For example, you could tell your social worker, key worker, foster parent or teacher. These people should look after your health and safety. If you feel you cannot tell them, or if you have a problem with them, you should try to get help from someone else. Adults should do something to make you safer. We have listed some places where you can get help and support at the end of this booklet, but there are others. ***Keep telling trusted adults about your fears about sexual abuse or assault until they do something to make you safer.***

### ***What if something has already happened to you or happens in the future?***

If it does happen to you, you may feel better if you tell a friend about what happened, but they may not be able to help. This is why it is important to tell a trusted adult, such as a teacher or social worker about it as soon as you can. They can do something to stop it happening again and to make sure you get any help you may need. Telling a trusted adult can also stop it happening to other children and young people. ***Remember, if someone sexually abuses or assaults you, it is not your fault. You are a child and you have a right to be protected.***

### ***Should you seek medical attention if you are sexually abused or assaulted?***

Depending on what happened, you may need medical treatment, or someone to talk to about it. You may find it hard to talk to a doctor or nurse about sexual abuse or assault, but they need to know what happened so they can give you any treatment you may need. If you cannot speak good enough English, make sure they know this. They can ask for someone to be there to help with language when you see the doctor. This person has to keep what you tell the doctor or nurse private. ***Sexual abuse or assault may cause physical problems and can be very upsetting. Telling your doctor about it soon after it happens is wise.***

### ***What might happen if you tell the police?***

You can telephone the police (on 999) or talk to a police officer at a police station at any time if you think you are at risk of sexual abuse or assault. They will help protect you. You should tell them if it happens to you, even if it happened some time ago. You may prefer to ask your social worker or other trusted adult to tell them for you first. The police have special officers to help people who have been sexually abused or assaulted. They will treat you kindly and with respect. Even so, it may help to take someone you trust with you for support. You can ask to talk to a female officer if you prefer. You can also have someone there to help with language if needed. ***Telling the police (or anybody else) about being sexually abused or assaulted will not affect whether you can stay in Britain.***

### ***What can you do if you are too afraid to tell anyone about it?***

You may feel too ashamed to tell others about being sexually abused or assaulted. You may also be afraid to tell because of what others may think of you, or of what they might do. The abuser may have warned you not to tell. You may also be afraid that if you tell you will be sent back to your home country (although this would not cause you to be sent back). If you feel you cannot talk to anyone face to face, you can talk to someone on the telephone at one of the help lines listed below. You do not have to give your name if you do not want to, but it



is best to ask what their rules on confidentiality are. *There are adults you can talk to about sexual abuse and sexual assault who will help you. You have a right to protection.*

***People who can help you if you are concerned about sexual abuse or assault:***

**ChildLine:** Telephone 0800 1111 free of charge any time of the day or night. Childline is a telephone helpline for children and young people who are upset or in danger. Trained adults give comfort, advice and protection.

**Samaritans:** Telephone 08457 90 90 90 any time of the day or night at the cost of a local call. The Samaritans give a telephone counselling service to all age groups who are emotionally upset. You can also email them at: [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org)

**The police:** Telephone 999 free of charge any time of the day or night. The police have special officers who help people who have been sexually abused or assaulted. They can get help with language and a female officer if needed.

**The Ethiopian Community Centre in the UK (ECCUK):** This charitable organisation gives advice and information on things like education, immigration, housing, health, and welfare rights. They also have cultural events. Address: Selby Centre, Selby Road, London N17 8JN. Telephone: 0208 801 9224. Website: [www.eccuk.btinternet.co.uk/index.htm](http://www.eccuk.btinternet.co.uk/index.htm).

***Ask a responsible adult, such as a social worker, if there is a community organisation especially for your cultural group near where you live, or look for them on the Internet.***

**The Havens:** Provide help for anyone in London, including children, who have been sexually assaulted. They give medical help and advice, counselling, and practical and emotional support. You do not need to have told the police what happened to use their services. ***If you cannot speak English, you will need to go with someone who can speak both English and your language.*** They have clinics at the following places:

**Haven - Camberwell**

King's College Hospital, Denmark Hill, London SE5

Tel: 020 3299 1599



**Haven - Paddington**


St Mary's Hospital, Praed Street, London W2

Tel: 020 7886 1101

**Haven - Whitechapel**

The Royal London Hospital, Whitechapel Road, London E1

Tel: 020 7247 478



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