



Session Leader guide

Safeguarding



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Talking to young people about cancer:

Discussing serious topics with young people can be a challenge, especially if it is sensitive and can cause distress.

Some may feel they are protecting young people by shying away from the topic, and it is natural to feel that way, but this will just leave them with questions if anyone close with them gets a diagnosis.

Young people can see when those close to them are not being themselves, or if something seems wrong. They may also notice a change in how they are behaving.

There are many benefits to talking to children and teenagers:

- You could help them feel less anxious by openly discussing it.
- You are showing them that speaking with you is a safe space.
- It might help them cope better with a difficult situation.

During the session:

Before the session starts, ensure viewers that they have the option to opt out if they may find it triggering or upsetting to sit through. You want to make sure everyone feels comfortable and is ready to engage.

Here is a list of things to consider if a child becomes triggered. You may already have an existing protocol within your school or organisation.

1. Recognize the signs of distress

What to Look For: Tears, withdrawal, visible discomfort, or expressions of sadness, fear, or anxiety.

Why: These signs indicate the child may need support, even if they aren't vocal about their feelings.

2. Give them space if needed

What to Do: Offer a quiet place for the child to sit away from the session, such as a separate classroom with another member of staff. Provide them with other activities like drawing or writing.

Why: Removing them from the group can reduce feelings of embarrassment and provide a calmer environment to process emotions.

3. Encourage them to share their feelings

What to Do: If they're willing, ask open-ended questions like, "Would you like to talk about what's making you upset?"

Why: Talking can help them process their emotions and provide you with insight into how to best support them.

4. Involve a trusted staff member if necessary

What to Do: If the child remains upset, involve a school counsellor, teacher, or safeguarding lead who can offer additional support.

Why: They may have a pre-existing relationship with the child and be better equipped to help.

5. Follow up after the session

What to Do: Check in with the child privately later in the day or the next day to see how they're feeling.

Why: This shows care and ensures the child feels supported even after the immediate moment of distress.

6. Inform parents or guardians if appropriate

What to Do: Depending on the severity of the situation and school policies, inform the child's parents or guardians about the incident.

Why: They may need to provide additional support at home or share relevant context (e.g., family experiences with cancer).

Disclosures:

What to do if a child discloses information to you related to the session?

During this session, there is a chance that a young person may express concerns or ask questions if something in the session has prompted a thought. If a child discloses something after a session about cancer, it's essential to handle the situation with sensitivity, care, and professionalism.

1. Stay calm and listen

Give the child your full attention, remain calm, and listen without interrupting. Reacting with shock or panic might discourage the child from sharing more. Show empathy and create a safe space for them to express themselves.

2. Acknowledge their feelings

Use supportive language like, "Thank you for telling me this," or "It's okay to feel the way you do." Validating their emotions helps the child feel heard and reassures them that they did the right thing by speaking up.

3. Avoid making promises you can't keep

Be honest about the fact that you may need to share the information with others to help them. For example, say, "I might need to tell someone who can support you." Promising confidentiality might conflict with your duty to report concerns to appropriate authorities or guardians.

4. Gather key information without pressuring

Let the child speak freely and avoid asking leading questions. Instead, use open-ended prompts like, "Can you tell me more about that?" Pressuring or probing may distort their account or make them feel uncomfortable.

5. Reassure the child about next steps

Let the child know they're not alone and that adults will work to support them. For example, say, "We'll make sure you get the support you need."

6. Seek additional support if needed

If the disclosure affects you emotionally, seek advice or debrief with a trusted colleague or supervisor. Handling sensitive information can be distressing, and support ensures you remain effective and balanced.

7. If appropriate, speak to the child's guardian.

Make their guardian aware that the child has expressed a concern as they may be able to explain why they may be feeling like that.



Support available in South Yorkshire & Bassetlaw:

Below is a list of local cancer support services from across the South Yorkshire and Bassetlaw region with a link to their website and contact details.

These voluntary, charity or community organisations are a vital external source for supporting those who have been affected by cancer.

You may also find support from national cancer charities or site specific support organisations. This directory is useful for searching relevant national or cancer specific organisations:

www.cancercaremap.org (clickable link)

You will also find a list of site-specific cancer support on the South Yorkshire and Bassetlaw Cancer Alliance website:

<https://canceralliancesyb.co.uk/contact/cancer-support-services> (clickable link)



South Yorkshire & Bassetlaw

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