

# Draft Guidelines for providing support information screens (or cards) relating to abuse, rape and violence: an outline and draft of some key sections, for consultation.

## Introduction

***“That’s how important this is. This isn’t something that’s just a story - this is changing people’s lives.”***

- Imagine watching a drama, documentary or news item about a traumatic event like child abuse, rape or domestic abuse when you have had that terrible experience. It triggers bad memories and difficult feelings. Perhaps you have never told anyone what happened to you. Now the wound is reopened and raw, or maybe you think you might want to report it to someone. But where do you turn for support?

- Ofcom guidance (section 2) says that “where a programme has dealt with a particularly sensitive issue, broadcasters may wish to provide a helpline specific to that issue.” But our research found that this isn’t followed consistently or across all platforms, especially internet based catch-up or on demand TV. That misses a vital opportunity to connect distressed victims/survivors with the support they really need. These guidelines have been written by victims/survivors and support services, to help broadcasters, commissioners and producers ensure support information is provided whenever it is needed and in accessible ways.

### **To add:**

- case study/ quote from survivor(s) about why information cards are important
- example of good practice e.g. Hollyoaks or Broadchurch
- quotes from survivor organisation & from TV professional in support of guidelines

## What do we mean by abuse and violence?

Abuse is often summarised as the misuse of power that causes harm. There are a wide range of behaviours and patterns that are abusive and our use of language is critical in ensuring we do not dismiss or minimise the abuse people have experienced. For example, child abuse with child sexual abuse so that those whose child abuse was not sexual feel their experience isn’t valid. It’s important to recognise all forms of abuse, to acknowledge the wide range of survivor experience.

All abuse involves a misuse of power within interpersonal relationships. The power may be due to age, relationship, strength, personality, profession, role or position. These experiences can occur in a variety of social settings including families, schools and communities. We understand that different forms of abuse can all have a deep and long lasting effect on us as children and adults and this can be even more profound if it occurs in early years and within significant relationships. These definitions highlight the key dynamics and characteristics of inter-personal abuse and violence.

## **Sexual Violence**

This can be any act of physical, psychological and emotional violation inflicted on a person without consent and includes rape and rape in marriage, sexual violence and childhood abuse, abuse which took place in institutions, forced marriage, honour based violence, female genital mutilation, trafficking and sexual exploitation, ritual abuse and sexual harassment, and forcing or manipulating someone to witness or participate in any sexual acts without their consent. (*Nottinghamshire Sexual Violence Support Services*).

## **Domestic Abuse**

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Domestic abuse is an incident, or pattern of incidents, of controlling, coercive, threatening, degrading and violent behaviour, including sexual violence, in the majority of cases by a partner or ex-partner, but also by a family member or carer. It may include coercive control, psychological and emotional abuse, honour-based violence, physical or sexual abuse, financial or economic abuse, harassment and stalking, online or digital abuse. (*Women's Aid*).

### **Child Abuse**

Child abuse is the neglect or mistreatment of a child or young person, by an adult/carer or sibling/peer, resulting in significant harm. The main types of abuse (used in child protection work) are neglect, physical, emotional and sexual abuse. Other types of abuse include sexual and criminal exploitation, trafficking and modern slavery, radicalisation, forced marriage, female genital mutilation, faith-based/spiritual abuse and the coercive control and multiple abuse of county lines. (*Working Together for Children 2019*).

### **Adult Abuse**

Adults who are vulnerable because of health, disability, capacity, or other care and support needs, or relationship of power, for example lecturer to student. Types of adult abuse include: neglect and acts of omission, sexual, physical and psychological abuse, organisational/ institutional abuse, discriminatory abuse, modern slavery, self neglect, domestic abuse including violence, financial abuse and spiritual abuse. (*Care Act 2014*).

It is important to recognise more subtle forms of abuse, such as the grooming which precedes many types of abuse, cultish behaviours and coercive control. It is also important to recognise emerging contexts and patterns of abuse, for example sex for rent and county lines.

Our understanding and recognition of abuse continues to grow and change; we advise consulting with expert services such as those listed at the end of this guidance, for a full and current understanding of abuse.

### **Why do we need these guidelines?**

#### **Prevalence of abuse and violence**

It is hard to give precise figures because we know that abuse and violence is under-reported. These statistics are taken from the most reliable sources. What we do know is that millions of viewers will have personal experience of some form of abuse and violence.

6.3% (2.4 million) of adults aged 16 to 74 years experienced domestic abuse in the last year (1.6 million women and 786,000 men). (*Office of National Statistics ONS 2019*)

an estimated 28.9% (4.8 million) of women aged 16 to 59 years have experienced some form of domestic abuse since the age of 16 years (*Crime Survey of England and Wales (CSEW) 2018*)

The Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) estimated that one in five adults aged 18 to 74 years experienced at least one form of child abuse, whether emotional abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse, or witnessing domestic violence or abuse, before the age of 16 years (8.5 million people).

In addition, an estimated 1 in 100 adults aged 18 to 74 years experienced physical neglect before the age of 16 years (481,000 people)

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An estimated 3.1 million adults aged 18 to 74 years were victims of sexual abuse before the age of 16 years

Prevalence was higher for females than males for each type of abuse, with the exception of physical abuse where there was no difference.

Many cases of child abuse remain hidden; around one in seven adults who called the National Association for People Abused in Childhood's (NAPAC's) helpline had not told anyone about their abuse before (ONS 2020).

1.2% of men and 4.2% of women aged 16-59 were victims of sexual assault in the year ending March 2018 (ONS 2019).

It's also important to understand that the majority of victim/survivors do not report their abuse at the time. For example, three quarters of survivors contacting Rape Crisis centres do so over an incident that occurred at least 12 months earlier. One study of adults abused as children found on average people waited over 16 years before disclosing (Smith et al 2015).

### **The impact of TV reporting and broadcasting of incidents of abuse and violence**

*"I can't keep it down anymore because it is in the media all the time".*

We understand that watching programmes that feature trauma, conflict or crisis can cause an increased risk of distress and anxiety (Ofcom (2015) Guidance notes section 1); the Australian Royal Commission on Child Abuse warned of impact for victims of seeing distressing material on TV (Tory Shepherd, Winston Churchill Trust 2015). UK Says No More (2019) states that mainstream TV has increased the number of reports and the number of survivors of violence seeking support. We found many recent examples of that:

- Action Line received an additional 50% more calls following the television story on three girls, focusing on the sexual abuse in Rochdale and Apple Tree Yard, which featured a rape storyline
- One in Four and Barnardos reported a big jump in enquires after the Ryan report coverage (Winston Churchill Trust 2015)
- It has been shown that where television programmes include storylines on sexual violence, there has been an increase in calls to support helplines. The Rape Crisis Helpline experienced a 132% increase in calls after the showing of Broadchurch ii
- A similar spike in calls to support helplines was experienced following the rape of David Platt in Coronation Street.

Duncan Craig from Survivors Manchester on the impact of the Hollyoaks storyline:

*"The moment we told the press that we were doing this story, all the social media, we've seen increases in calls to our support line. We've seen increases in people coming forward and asking us 'can I get help?'. When our ISVA team and our therapy team are sat down with someone at the assessment point and we're saying to them 'why now, why are you speaking about this now?' So many times people are saying, 'I was watching Hollyoaks, I was seeing what was going on for Brody and Ollie and it was just resonating with me, and because I know that you're connected with it...I just thought I could come and get some support from you.' It translates literally that much. That's how important this is. This isn't something that's just a story - this is changing people's lives."*

#### **To add:**

- case study/vignette from survivor(s) about impact and needing/accessing support

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### Existing Guidance

The main place this is covered is in Ofcom Guidance (2017) Section 2 Harm and Offence Rule 2.3 Context & Information: Information, labelling and warnings. This encourages broadcasters to give clear information and adequately label content, and suggests providing helpline numbers for sensitive subjects, but it is not compulsory. The problem that trailers “come upon audiences unawares” is recognised, and broadcasters are required to give advance warning of challenging subjects such as graphic violence or sexually explicit scenes, where trailers appear during programming that is dissimilar in content.

We would like warning and information cards to be provided whenever abuse, sexual assault and violence are featured, in drama and factual programming, and both live, catch-up and on demand TV and radio. We also highlight the importance of information in a variety of accessible formats, and to include a range of support options, not just helplines which are currently hugely overloaded.

Until such guidance is adopted by Ofcom, we are asking broadcasters to voluntarily commit to this good practice, for the sake of everyone affected by these issues.

### To Add

#### Survivors say...

- quotes encompassing what to do and not do from our perspective
- e.g. importance of a web address with a page that gives both good info and signposting
- case study/quotes demonstrating impact of good and poor practice

### When do we need warnings & screen cards?

Survivors tell us that the **type or length** of programme makes no difference - we need this information in all situations and settings. All types of programming: drama, soaps, news items, magazine formats, documentaries, music videos and trailers; and all types of broadcasting: TV, radio, internet-based, on-demand and catch-up TV.

Survivors tell us that it is important to have a **warning before all scheduled programmes**. Ideally this would also include support information, to be repeated after the show, giving people maximum opportunity to copy the information. It also helps to forewarn victims/survivors who may be watching in the room with the person who is abusing them. It's helpful where possible to name the issue, e.g. *"sexual violence and abuse will be present in the upcoming show, if you are affected by this..."*

Survivors tell us it is vital to **have information cards after every programme** and relevant news items. This should also name the main issue e.g. *"for support around domestic abuse and any other issues raised..."* as this helps victims to recognise their experience and raises awareness amongst the public.

Survivors tell us that it is important to **provide information early** on in story lines, particularly when there is foreshadowing of abusive relationships; for example when a domestic violence situation is foreshadowed with scenes of coercive control, or child abuse is foreshadowed with grooming. This helps to protect people from unexpected triggers, and to allow them to seek early support. Some survivors will be drawn in

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unexpectedly; others may seek programmes about these themes at certain parts of their journey.

### **How do we make info accessible?**

Our research suggests that it's important to provide information cards in a variety of formats and contexts. For example, not everyone watches the credits, and so if information was in the credits, such as when an organisation was featured on the programme, the majority of people would have missed it.

To be accessible, information needs to be in a variety of formats: written on screen, speakover and online information.

We also need to provide access to as wide a range of support as possible. We know some services have waiting lists up to a year; some helplines are only able to answer 1 in 10 calls. Providing a comprehensive range of sources increases the likelihood that people will be able to get the help they so urgently need.

We recommend:

- a warning with an information card before the programme that names the main issue.
- an information card that is on screen for more than 15 seconds, that provides a direct link to support information e.g. a helpline and webpage with links to organisations, forums and helplines; with a voice over that names the main issue.
- links to websites, forums and agencies as well as helpline
- information cards each side of on-demand and catch-up TV programmes and connected web pages.
- the most direct link to information possible; so it should not be necessary to search through the website to find the right page.
- a range of support information that recognises the range of survivor needs; for example agencies that work with men, or women, or honour-based violence.
- information areas of websites that are indexed by issue; so you can search for the issue, not the programme.
- links to information circulated through social media around the time programmes are scheduled or featured news items.

### **Best Practice in a nutshell**

- bullet point summary of ideal scenario - could be case study of Hollyoaks or Broadstairs
- checklist to follow?
- extension suggestions eg interviews, webinars etc
- suggestions of areas to cover in possible training for those who decide/write speakouts
- contact and support with specialist agencies
- contact with survivors via agencies and On the Road Media

### **Contacts & Resources**

List of key agencies that can provide information and advice to TV companies.

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List of key agencies that we would recommend be included in their support information pages.

**References**

Smith, N., Dogaru, C. & Ellis, F. (2015) *Hear me. Believe me. Respect me. A survey of adult survivors of child sexual abuse and their experience of support services*. Ipswich: University College Suffolk and Survivors in Transition.

**Consultation Questions**

1. As the laws around sexual and domestic abuse and other abuses are continually being updated, how would you suggest that the guidelines which people follow around provision of information cards should be updated? Eg, when the law changes or every 3 years, 5 years etc.
  
2. Who do you think should hold responsibility for the checking that abuse definitions are up to date when considering the provision of information cards - Ofcom, individual broadcasters, individuals employed to make these decisions. Please can you explain why?
  
3. Are there any further comments you would like to make on this issue or around the guidelines as a whole?

Additionally, to help us have impactful views and examples from survivors and survivor/support organisations, if this applies to you, please tell us:

4. Do you have any examples of when you or your agency have been affected by coverage of abuse and violence on TV, that we could use as an anonymous example?
  
5. Do you have any examples of victim-survivors seeking support after watching a programme, that we could quote as an anonymous case study?
  
6. Why do you think these guidelines are important? And can we please quote you on that?
  
7. Do you wish to add your name/organisation to support these guidelines and our campaign? If so please confirm what name we should use, and provide us with a logo if you wish.