## Questions that you can ask someone in relation to their partner’s sexual abuse offending

These questions help you ascertain the non-abusing partner’s knowledge, understanding or even their ability to process what has happened – responses may lack genuine information or may show denial, or continued grooming by the abusing partner.

* What is your understanding of what your partner did, exactly?
* What was the nature of the assault?
* What were they prosecuted for?
* Who do they blame – give them an A4 sheet of paper and ask them to draw a large circle and denote the percentage of blame they apportion to whom – they may include the victim, family or agencies. If they blame the child protection agencies do not challenge but rather enquire why this is their response.
* Ask her feelings about their partner’s abuse – five ways their partner’s sexual offending affected them and the feelings it has left them with.

Sexual abuse: Gain their understanding of sexual abuse – you may use case scenarios – do they understand sexual abusive behaviours, consent, age, what is sexual abuse – the legal framework etc.

Denial: Various form of denial – you may want to talk about this and why people may not believe the allegations is often because the thought that someone they know could do such a thing is unimaginable – this belief is then further compounded by the denial of the offender – the disbelief is strengthened by the fact the offender is often so convincing when they say they didn’t do it.

Ask for possible reasons for denial by the partner and other family members

* Explain how sex offenders operate (google and read Finkelhor’s 4 preconditions model for information) – use a case scenario and ask them to think about the following questions
1. Does the offender present as nice, angry, nasty or mixture of all?
2. How did they groom the victim into obedience and ensure they did not tell?
3. Who might have got in the way of offending and how did they overcome the problems so they could abuse in secret?
4. Who else did they groom and manipulate and how do you think they might have done it?
5. What do you think they told themself to excuse their offending and make it okay?
6. Who do you think they blame?

After you’ve done the exercise with case scenario ask them to apply this to their partner and even though they do not believe this is true they should attempt to respond to these questions:

1. Why did the partner want to do it?
2. Does the partner know it was wrong and did they think it was okay?
3. If the partner knew it was wrong how did they overcome this so that they could offend?
4. Who did they choose and why?
5. How did the partner get past his partner or others who might have protected child?
6. How did they get child to comply and prevent them from telling others?
7. Will they feel a sense of guilt?

Victim Awareness

* Identify 3 feelings you think the victim experienced during the abuse and 3 feelings since the abuse
* Identify 3 thoughts you think the victim had about themselves during the abuse and since the abuse
* What do you think are the emotional, physical, behavioural symptoms of sexual abuse?
* What do think are the signs in victim’s attitudes and self-perception?
* If they know of the victim – in what ways has their relationship with the victim or family been affected?
* In what ways do you think the victim has suffered?

This will help you ascertain if they are able to empathise with the victim or continues to apportion blame to them of the family.

You may want or need them to consider what boundaries and rules they would put in place if their partner was hypothetically allowed contact with the children – what would this look like, where, how often, length of contact, supervision. How would unexpected situations be managed such as child falls ill and need to take to doctors – who would they allow the children to be cared by, who will perform personal care tasks – would they allow the offending partner?