**Post Sexual Abuse (PSA) service**

**Case study – Susie**

*Family Action’s Post Sexual Abuse (PSA) service supports children and young people up to the age of 18 who have experienced sexual abuse. Our free and confidential service aims to improve the mental health and emotional wellbeing of children and young people, and bring about greater stability in their lives. Therapeutic Support Worker Cath explains how she has supported one particular child, who we will call Susie (\* pseudonym).*

“Children’s Services referred Susie to our service when she was aged 10. Susie had disclosed that her step-brother had engaged her in sexually inappropriate behaviour, as well as raising other concerns such as domestic abuse between her dad and step-mum.

“Following her disclosure Susie became anxious, withdrawn, uninterested in food, and was sleeping more than usual. When I first met Susie, she was being home-schooled by her mum as she was anxious about being away from her mum, and not managing well at school.

“I have offered Susie a number of one-to-one therapeutic sessions which have included activities to help her explore issues around her experiences and feelings about the abuse – responsibility, blame, power, control, being believed, feeling unable to tell. We have also looked at why it might have been hard for her to disclose what was happening, and at appropriate and inappropriate sexual activity and boundaries. I have also supported Susie to develop strategies to help her to spend time away from her mum and work towards returning to mainstream school, for example, by creating a ‘worry bully’ and working on how to talk back to this bully. We have included Susie’s mum in our work where appropriate and I have offered telephone support to her mum outside of sessions.

“Susie has engaged well in the sessions. She has become visibly happier and more confident, and has been sleeping less and eating more. When I first met Susie she was anxious and did not want to leave her mum alone. She is now able to go to friends’ homes without her mum, as well as play out with her friends at the local park. Susie returned to mainstream school, and has recently transitioned to secondary school.

“I have helped Susie to accept that what has happened was not okay, but that she can express her feelings about it, that she can recover and will be okay. She has valued our support, saying it has been helpful to have someone to share her worries with, and to talk to about what happened. “*Thank you for taking my worries away, you have been a life saver.”*

*“The level of support is amazing. Susie has really benefitted from having an adult who understands and is very approachable. Cath has been so understanding supportive and consistent. My child has been able to learn what happened was not her fault. I don’t know where to begin, thank you doesn’t feel enough. ..You have given me my little girl back, for that I am truly grateful… You are worth your weight in gold.” (Mum)*

Find out more about the work of the PSA team at [www.family-action.org.uk/psa](http://www.family-action.org.uk/psa)