

Childhood and family life

There will be as many different family stories as members of the group and although there will be differences there will also be common experiences. Some will have very happy childhoods but some may have been raised in difficult family circumstances or in institutions where they were neglected and abused. If this is known or suspected it may be that these topics are best avoided but it is not always possible to know, because disclosures can happen without warning.

Some useful questions to trigger discussion

- Tell me about your family. Your parents, siblings, where you lived
- Did you have anybody else living with you?
- How was the house heated?
- Did you have a parlour or a room that was kept for visitors or special occasions?
- Did you have pictures on the wall?
- Did your home have ornaments or objects on the mantelpiece?
- What were mealtimes like in your house?
- What duties did you have in the home when you were old enough?
- Who did the cooking and how was it done?
- Where did you sleep? Who did you sleep with?
- What were the bath and toilet arrangements in your family?
- What pastimes or entertainment did your family engage in?
- Can you remember the games you played with your siblings?
- What happened on Sundays?
- Did you ever have visitors?
- How were you punished if you were naughty?
- Did you have any pets?