

# Tackling the trauma of sexual abuse

LOCAL people who've survived childhood sexual abuse are being offered support and help in a new Kirkcaldy-based initiative.

A project has been launched to relieve the suffering and distress of men and women who experienced sexual abuse as children.

The Kirkcaldy Area Abuse Survivors Project, based at 8 Hunter Street, is an independent Urban Programme funded project.

Because of the nature of its funding, it must give priority to people from the Templehall, Smeaton, Linktown and Dysart areas.

A range of free, confidential support services including one-to-one counselling and group therapy are available for people in those areas — as well as priority parts of Glenrothes and Levenmouth.

Abuse by a family member, a family friend, teacher or stranger could have happened once or many times over a period.

Project staff believe that the important thing is for survivors to be able to identify experiences as sexually abusive.

Support and information is also offered to non-abusing parents and to partners and other supporters of adult survivors.

"We work with men and women and we are probably getting about five women for every man," explained co-ordinator Carolyn Cook.

"Rather than representing that there are five times as many women being abused, it is probably that women find

## Project set up to offer support

Report by  
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it easier to come forward and ask for help. There is much less public awareness of sexual abuse of boys than there is of girls," she added.

According to the project staff, many survivors find it helps to share their experiences with others in a group.

They can learn that they're not alone and can share feelings and ways of coping with others who've been there and understand.

Two groups are available — the Fife incest survivors group gives women the chance to share as much or as little as they want at fortnightly meetings while priority area groups will meet for 10 or 12 weeks with members expected to make a commitment for that time.

The support group is always looking for sympathetic women and men to join a team of volunteers, offering one to one befriending to survivors and providing cover on a telephone helpline.

Volunteers are offered initial and ongoing training as well as support and supervision — a training course is likely



Co-ordinator Carolyn Cook and assistant co-ordinator Lynn Simpson pictured at the launch of the project.

to start in September.

The project, with a link to the region's social work department, has secured charitable status.

Anyone who needs help — or wants to offer it — can contact the Kirkcaldy Area Abuse Survivors Project on (01592) 646644.