



# What Happened to Elephant

A story of help and hope  
for children and their families





## *Dear parent or caregiver*

This is a note for the trusted adult before you begin

This book is designed to help children and their families develop a shared understanding of what might happen after a child has been sexually abused.

It is hoped that this book will provide a focal point for families to begin safe and honest conversations about what is happening for the family, and the thoughts and feelings that they are experiencing.

The information has been divided into accessible and digestible sections specifically for younger children and can be read as an entire story or section by section. The intention is for families to dip in and out of the book as needed, using the words and language that best suits them.

Each section suggests focused questions or activities about the story's characters to promote conversations and offer opportunities for children to share their own thoughts and feelings in a safe way.

Signposting to further resources for each topic is provided on the last page of this book. There is also further information and support in the accompanying caregiver's guide.



## This is Elephant

Elephant lives with their family in a big leafy jungle with many other animals. Elephant's family are just like many other families in the jungle.

However, recently Elephant has not been feeling themselves. Something was happening to Elephant that the other animals did not know about.

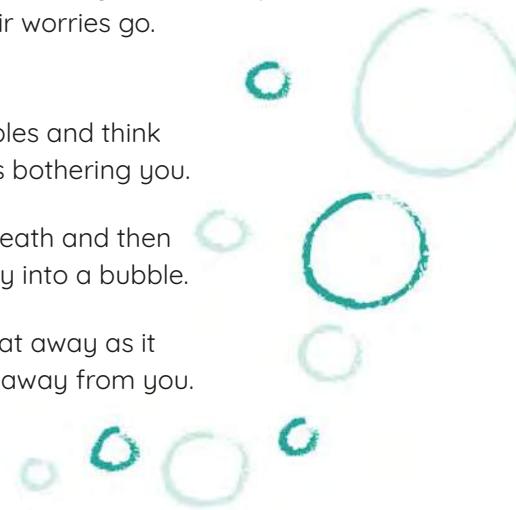
Someone was hurting Elephant in a way that was confusing and scary. Elephant did not understand what was happening, but they knew they didn't like it.



### ACTIVITY: Worry Bubbles

Sometimes worries can feel like little bubbles bouncing around inside us. Worry bubbles helped Elephant let some of their worries go.

1. Find a bottle of bubbles and think about a worry that is bothering you.
2. Take a slow, deep breath and then gently blow the worry into a bubble.
3. Watch the bubble float away as it carries the worry far away from you.



### ACTIVITY: Comfort Kit

Sometimes Elephant's big feelings make it difficult to relax or feel calm. Elephant has a small box to keep some of their favourite things to use whenever they feel upset or worried.

The things in the box all help Elephant to relax and take a break from the things that are bothering them. Some of the things that could go in a comfort box, like Elephant's, include:

- Small soft toys
- Bubbles
- Pens and a notebook
- Slime or playdough
- Colouring book and pencils
- Squeezy ball or fidget toys or spinners
- Snow globe or Kaleidoscope



# When Elephant's family found out

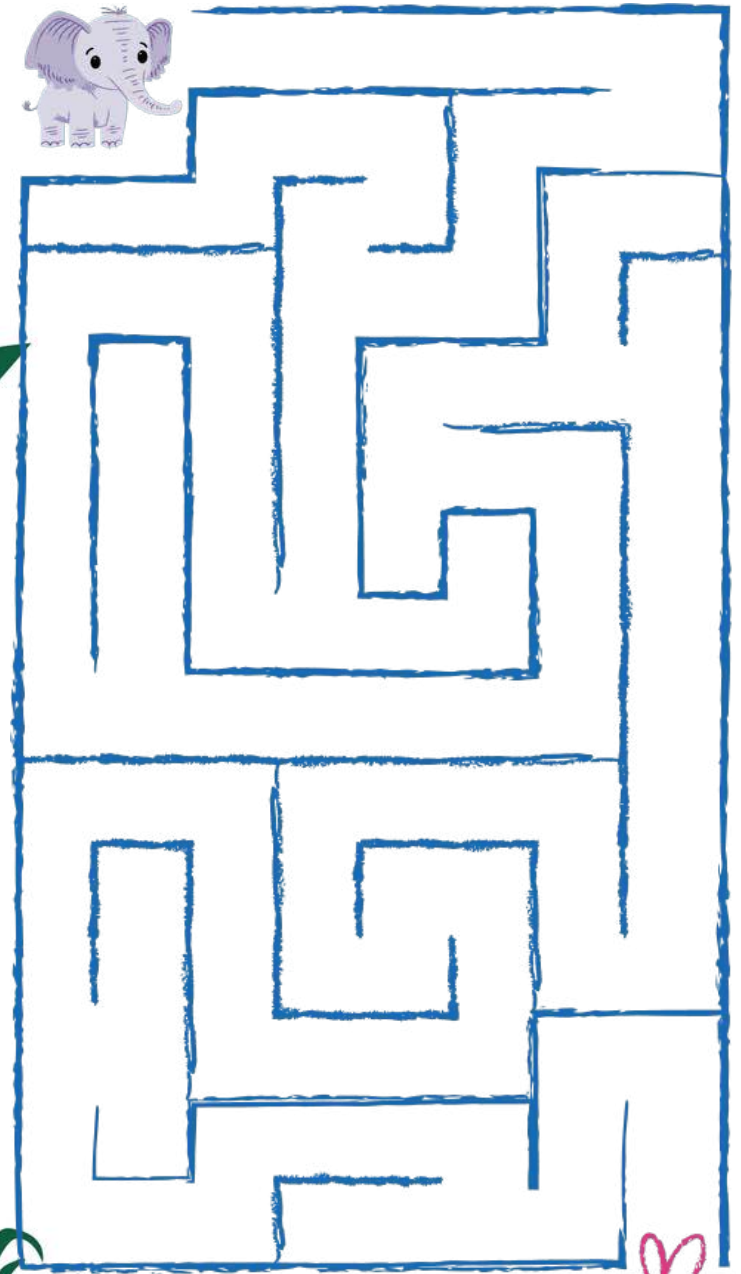


Elephant wanted the thing that was hurting them to stop but did not know what to do. Elephant had been thinking and worrying about what might happen if others found out. Elephant wondered, would they or others be in trouble? Would the other animals be able to help? Maybe something even worse might happen, although Elephant did not know what?

Elephant had told their pet mouse and their favourite teddy what was happening. Mouse and teddy had been good listeners but they could not stop what was hurting Elephant any more than Elephant could.



**ACTIVITY:** Tracing this maze with his trunk helped Elephant to feel calm.





**ACTIVITY:** Circle the feelings Elephant might be having



Sad



Angry



Scared



Brave



Loved



Lonely



Shy



Happy



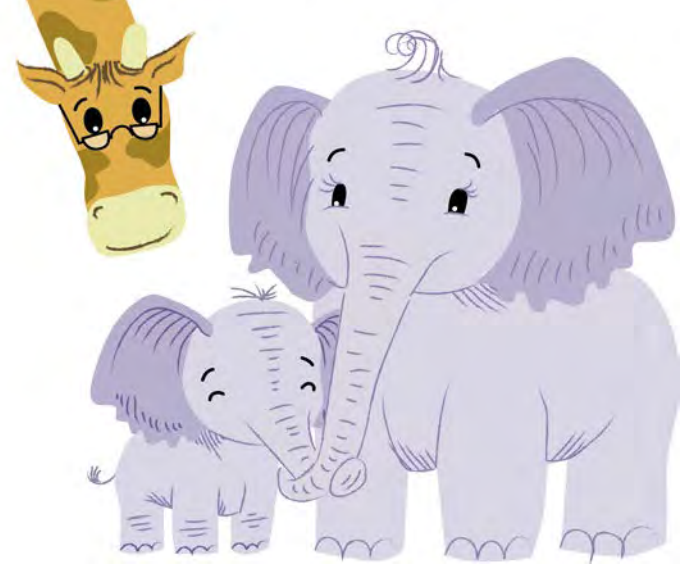
Worried



Shocked

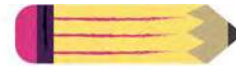


Confused



Then one day other members of Elephant's family found out what had been happening. Elephant's family explained that Elephant had not done anything wrong.

The family did everything they could to make sure Elephant knew that they loved them just the same as before and they would keep Elephant safe.



**ACTIVITY:** Calm Bottle

Elephant's family helped Elephant make a calm bottle for when things were feeling tricky. When Elephant turned the bottle over they would watch all the things inside slowly float about, helping Elephant to feel calm and safe. They gathered:

1. An old plastic bottle.
2. Some glitter.
3. Some sequins, beads, small toys or coloured buttons.
4. Some food colouring.
5. Some clear gel liquid like hand soap. Together they added all the things to the bottle and filled it with water.
6. Then a grown up helped Elephant glue the lid on tightly..



## Special helpers



The family knew they had to ask for help to keep everyone safe and to make sure that Elephant was not being hurt anymore. This might be by hurting their body or showing them things that are not OK to share.

Wherever you live there are special helpers who have different jobs to make sure that everyone is safe when they have been really hurt.

To do their job, sometimes helpers might have to ask difficult questions, so they know the best way to help. Elephant wasn't sure if they wanted helpers coming into their jungle. Elephant's family explained that helpers also make important decisions about what happens next when someone has been hurt by another, just as Elephant had been.

Help can come from many different places. These are some, but not all, of the helpers Elephant might meet.



A therapist helps children understand confusing feelings through play and activities.



A doctor helps to make sure our bodies are healthy and safe.

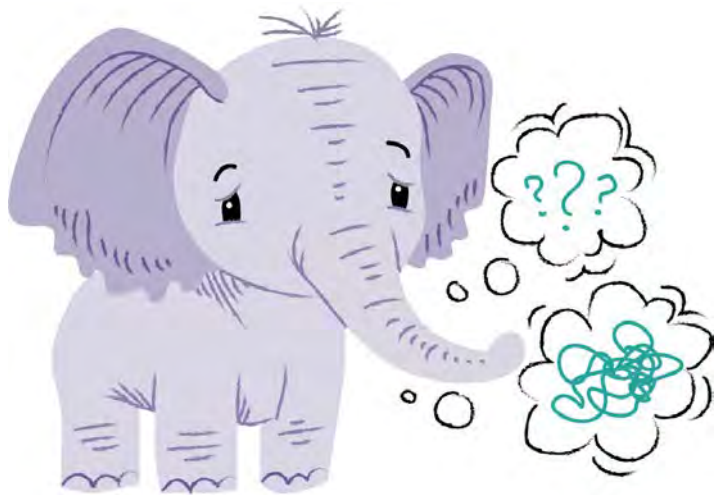


Police officers listen to what has happened and work with the adults to make sure that this does not happen again.



A social worker helps families know what to do so children feel and stay safe.

# What's happened in Elephant's family



After the family found out what had been happening, Elephant noticed that some things in the family were different. There were some family members that Elephant couldn't go and visit anymore. This made Elephant sad.

Elephant couldn't do some of the things they enjoyed like having sleepovers with their friends and this made them angry. There were some family members that had their own big feelings about what had happened to Elephant. This was making them act differently, which was confusing.

Elephant was beginning to worry that everything that was happening now was all their fault, even though everyone had said it was not. Elephant had a lot of questions but did not know who to ask or what to say. Elephant was worried that their questions might make others upset or angry.



**ACTIVITY:** What questions might Elephant like to ask?

1.

2.

3.



**ACTIVITY:** Playdough Smash

Sometimes Elephant used playdough to let their feelings out. They would squeeze it lightly or squeeze it hard, squeeze it fast or squeeze it slow.

Elephant would cut it into pieces or roll it to make it long and thin. They would SMASH it flat when they were angry or roll it gently to help feel calm.





Sad Happy Scared Embarrassed

# Elephant's thoughts, feelings and behaviours

Elephant also had many big, confusing feelings and had been acting differently too. Elephant did not understand why this was happening which made them feel scared.

At home sometimes Elephant was very sad but did not know why. At other times they would get very angry and say or do things that they felt upset about after.

At school Elephant found it hard to listen in class and would make mistakes, this would make Elephant feel embarrassed. Sometimes Elephant's friends would say or do things that upset Elephant and they would fall out, which made Elephant feel lonely.

Often Elephant didn't want to do the things that usually made them feel happy like drawing or swimming. Often Elephant felt worried and uncomfortable and did not want anyone to notice that things were not OK for them.

Many times, Elephant just wanted to pretend that everything was OK, and they had nothing to worry about. However, no matter how hard Elephant tried, their feelings would bubble up and out of them in surprising ways and Elephant would feel terrible again.



Hopeful Angry Brave



## ACTIVITY: Balloon Popping

Elephant needed to let out some of their big feelings. Elephant thought about each feeling, then they took a deep breath and blew that feeling into a balloon. Then Elephant would let the balloon fly around the room. Sometimes Elephant would tie the balloon up and then stomp on it, making it POP!



## ACTIVITY: Elephant's feelings are all jumbled up, can you help them find them?

Q R A D S B X S H Y H H  
 A S N X A F L W C R O H  
 F C G F D I D H Q I P D  
 V A E O N L D X S Q E X  
 M R R K E H A P P Y F L  
 R E N S S F N F R G U Q  
 N D H Z S U Q Y S D L K  
 D T N S I B R A V E R O

Sadness Scared Happy Brave  
 Shy Hopeful Anger



# Telling others and getting help

Elephant's family knew that when hurtful things have happened it can be difficult to know who else to tell.

They knew they needed to let some others know so they could help Elephant too. What happened to Elephant was not a secret, but only some animals needed to know. One family member said that knowing what happened to Elephant was like holding something precious that might be easily broken, so it was important to think carefully about who they share it with.

Elephant and the family thought carefully about who they should tell. Together they made a list of those they felt were safe to know what had happened to Elephant so they could help when things felt difficult.



## ACTIVITY: Helping Hands

Elephant had many animals that loved and helped them. This activity helped Elephant think about who those animals were.

1. On a piece of paper trace around your hand.
2. Draw a picture of a heart in the palm of the hand on the paper.
3. On each finger of the hand write the name of someone you feel loves you and keeps you safe.
4. Cut around the hand shape.

Now you can fold down the fingers so that they are facing into the palm of the hand and helping to keeping the heart feel loved and safe.



## ACTIVITY: Dance it out

Elephant and their family loved to play music and to move or dance together to show how they were feeling.

When they were angry they would play loud and fast music they could jump and stomp to.

When they were sad they would play light and gentle music and sway and stretch.

When they were happy they would play fun and joyous music and let their hearts fill up with love.



# Feeling hopeful

After some time, Elephant did begin to feel more like themselves again. They found they could listen at school and were not falling out with their friends so much. They went back to their favourite activities and enjoyed just being Elephant.

There were still times when Elephant might feel sad or angry or missed those people they do not see any more. Sometimes they wished things could be how they wanted them to be.

It was not always easy for Elephant to share with others how they were feeling and sometimes they had to have conversations that felt uncomfortable and embarrassing. By sharing their feelings and allowing others to help, even when it was hard, Elephant knew that they were loved, their feelings were important and others could keep them safe.

Elephant has some important things they want you to know:

It is good to share how you are feeling with those who know what has happened so they can help.


All your thoughts and feelings are ok and normal. There are lots of ways to help these feelings come out safely.

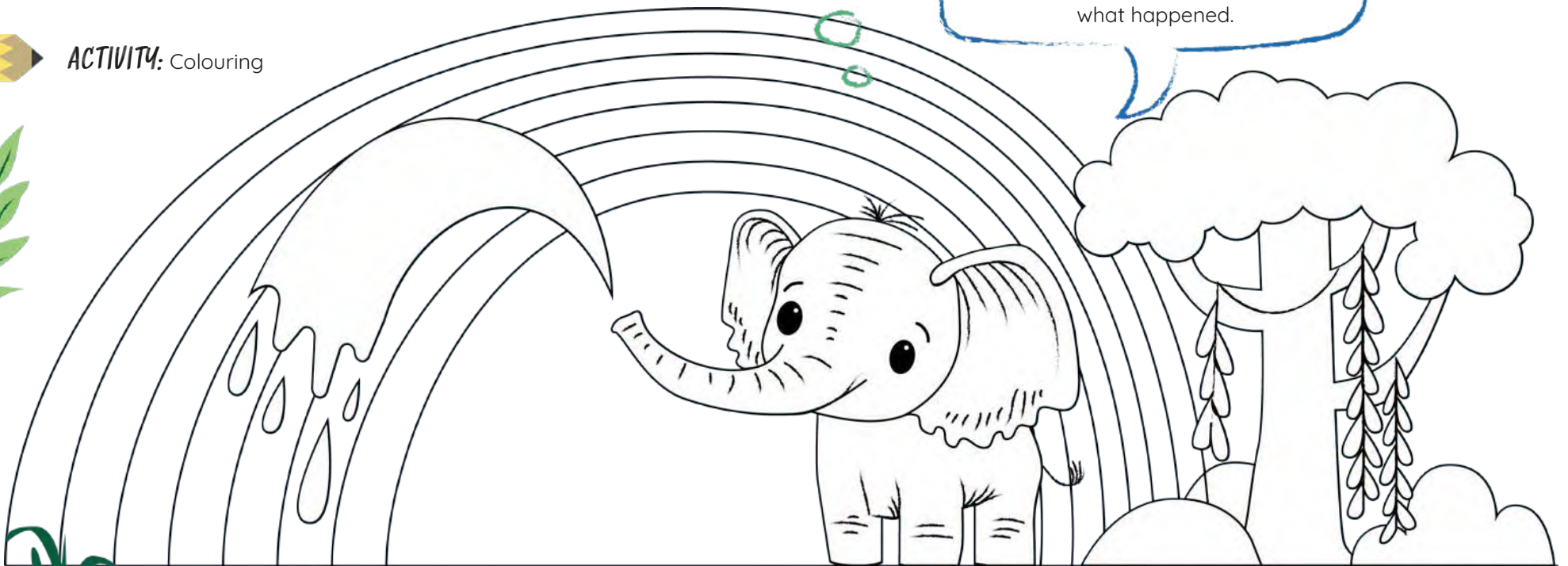
You are not to blame for what happens to the person who has hurt you.


What happened was not your fault and it was not your job to make it stop.

People believe what you have told them and are listening to what you have to say.

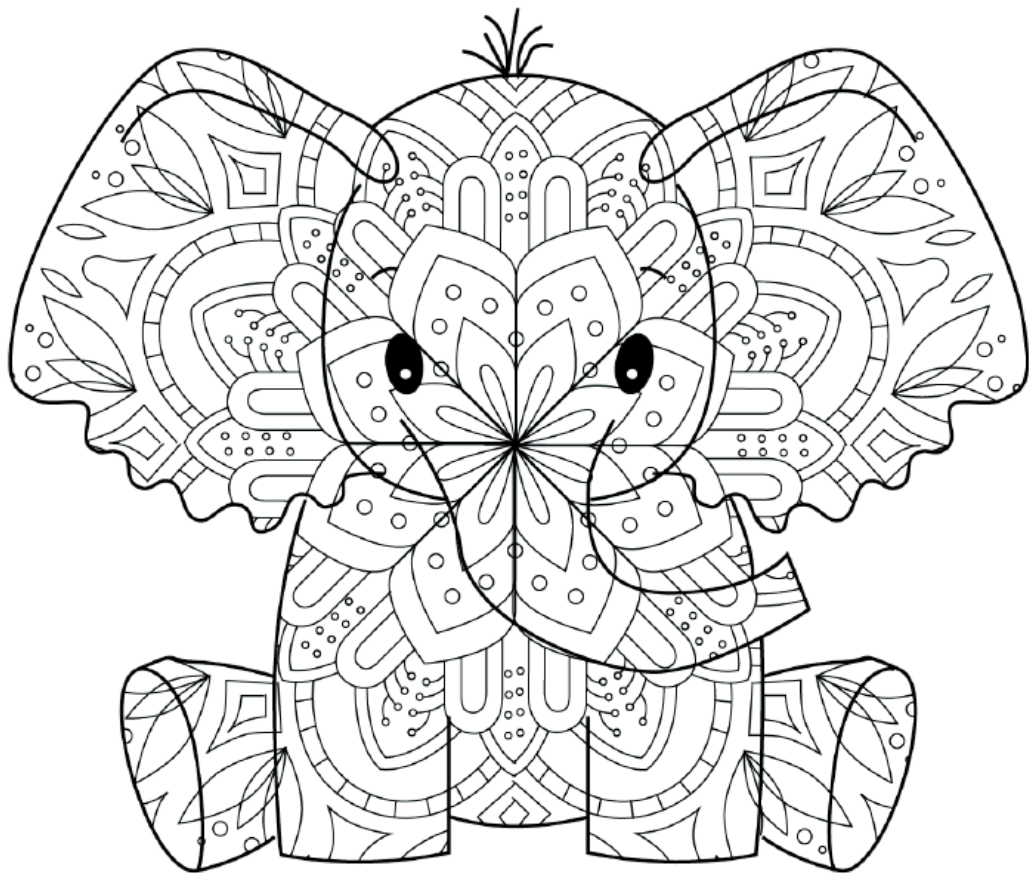
It is not your job to fix things or make others feel better about what happened.

 **ACTIVITY:** Colouring





**ACTIVITY:** Colouring



## Additional resources

### BOOKS

**My many colour days**

- Dr. Seuss

**The invisible string**

- Patrice Karst

**Huge bag of worries**

- Virginia Ironside

**Ruby's Worry**

- Tom Percival (this is one in a collection of books by this author)

**All About Feelings**

- Felicity Brooks & Frankie Allen

**Elly Jelly and the massive mum meltdown**

- Sarah Naish (this is one in a collection of books by this author)

**All emotions are ok**

- Emily Hayes.

**The colour monster**

- Anna Llenad

### ACTIVITIES

**5 senses grounding exercise** [bit.ly/5senses5mins](https://bit.ly/5senses5mins)


Physical activities such as kicking a football or throwing a ball against a wall together can be a safe way to let out feelings.

**Feelings or question tree** - this could be used to communicate feelings or to ask questions. [bit.ly/feelings-tree](https://bit.ly/feelings-tree)

**Feelings thermometer** - Often it can be difficult to put feelings into words, a visual guide like a feeling thermometer can help children communicate their feelings. [bit.ly/feelings-thermometer](https://bit.ly/feelings-thermometer)

**Make your own worry monster** or creature to gobble up the things that are bothering you. [bit.ly/worry-monster-box](https://bit.ly/worry-monster-box)


Further activities, ideas and information can be found in the accompanying parent and carer/giver's guide as well as the 8 to 13 book

A decorative border of various tropical plants and leaves in shades of green, surrounding the central text. The plants include a large palm frond on the left, a monstera leaf at the top right, a bird of paradise flower in the center right, and several other leafy branches at the bottom.

This book was co-created  
by both caregivers and  
professionals.

Thank you to the children and  
families who have shared their  
knowledge and understanding  
of this journey. Without your  
support it would not have been  
possible to create this book.

We would also like to thank the  
professionals from NHS England,  
Bromley Thrive, The Havens and  
We Stand who have supported  
the project.

The background is a vibrant teal color adorned with various tropical plant illustrations. At the top, a branch with dark green, pointed leaves arches across the frame. On the left side, a large, light green fern-like leaf extends vertically. In the bottom left, a dark green monstera leaf is partially visible. On the right side, a bright orange and yellow bird of paradise flower is in bloom, surrounded by smaller green leaves. At the bottom right, a dark blue, fan-shaped plant with several pointed leaves is shown.

Follow Elephant and their family as they navigate what happens after a disclosure of sexual abuse.

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As Elephant shares their journey, helping others to understand their own, they offer ideas and activities that can support children to share their own thoughts and feelings in a safe way.

There is further information and support in the accompanying carer/giver and 8 to 13 guides.

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