

## SECTION 2

### Creating a Virtual Group Member

#### Time

10 -15 minutes

#### Resource List

Flip chart/large sheet of paper

#### Description of Activity

This is a useful tool to have when working with young people on sensitive topics. It allows young people to talk about situations without directly talking about themselves or people they know. Young people should be discouraged from disclosing information about themselves and their family. Try to encourage them to start telling the group about things by saying "I know someone who..." Once you have developed your virtual group member bring them to every session and tell the story through them.

Ask the young people to imagine a young person who is **like them but is not them or anyone they know**. Suggest they give the virtual group member a name.

Ask them questions to determine the characteristics of the person. Someone in the group **must** have these characteristics or be in that situation e.g. the virtual group member could not live with their grandparents if no one in the group lives with their grandparents, the virtual group member cannot smoke if no one in the group smokes. **N.B.** Care must be taken here.

There have been situations where the group have described someone they all know. Facilitators need to be aware of this and not allow this to happen. It can lead to virtual bullying of the person. Also try not to let all of the characteristics of the virtual group member be negative e.g. they take drugs, hate school or have been in trouble with the police.

Information about the virtual group member should be written on flip chart paper (you may like to have a draw round the body shape to write on) and should be brought out and displayed during every session along with the group agreement.

Questions to ask the young people when developing the group member may include:

- How old are they?
- Are they male or female?
- Where do they live?
- Who do they live with?
- How many brothers and sisters do they have?
- What do they like to do?
- Do they have close relationships with any other members of their family?
- Do they have a boyfriend/girlfriend?
- Which school do they go to?
- Do they like school?
- What would they like to do when they leave school?
- Do they smoke?

You may also like to find out more about their family situation

- Does their mum live with their dad?
- Do they have family that lives nearby?

## **Activity 5 - Creating a Virtual Group**

The virtual group member can be included in future sessions by asking the young people, “What would \*\*\*\*\* think about this?” or “What would \*\*\*\*\*do in this situation?” This should help to remove the young people directly from the situations raised whilst being able to discuss important issues. Characteristics of this person or situations in their life can be added during other sessions throughout the programme.