



Child Sexual Abuse

Guide for Parents and Carers

What is child sexual abuse?

The definition of Child Sexual Abuse is defined as

*'forcing or enticing a child or young person to **take part in sexual activities**, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening.*

*The activities may involve **physical contact**, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing.*

*They may also include **non-contact activities**, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet).*

*Sexual abuse is **not solely perpetrated by adult males**. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children. (HM Government, 2018)*

Child Sexual Abuse in the family environment is defined as 'sexual abuse perpetrated or facilitated in or out of the home, against a child under the age of 18, by a family member, or someone otherwise linked to the family context or environment, whether or not they are a family member. Within this definition, perpetrators may be close to the victim (e.g. father, uncle, stepfather), or less familiar (e.g. family friend, babysitter).'

Who does it affect?

Research from the Children's Commissioner suggests there were 425,000 victims of Child Sexual Abuse in the United Kingdom between 2012 and 2014.

There were a total of **54,898** sexual offences against children recorded by the police in the UK in 2015/16.

Children with disabilities are **three** times more likely to be victims of sexual abuse.

Over 90% of sexually abused children were abused by someone they knew

Around a third of sexual abuse is committed by other children and young people

34% of 11-17 year olds sexually abused by an adult said nobody else knew about it

How does it happen?

Many young people have been 'groomed' by an abusing adult who befriends the young person and makes them feel special by buying them gifts or giving them lots of attention. Young people may be targeted online or in person. Sexual exploitation can also occur between young people of a similar age. In most cases, the abuser will have power of some kind over the young person. It may be that the abuser is older or more emotionally mature, physically stronger, or that they are in a position where they are able to control the young person. There are some situations that can make young people more vulnerable to exploitation; by becoming distant from the people who would usually look after them. Young people who are having difficulties at home, regularly go missing or who have experienced care may be particularly vulnerable.

What are the signs?

The signs of sexual abuse are not always easy to spot. Working out what is going on, especially if your child won't talk or is too young to communicate what is happening, can be very difficult. If you're worried that a child is being abused, watch out for any unusual behaviour such as below as advised by the NSPCC

- withdrawn
- suddenly behaves differently
- anxious
- clingy
- depressed
- takes risks
- misses school
- changes in eating habits
- obsessive behaviour
- nightmares

- aggressive
- problems sleeping
- eating disorders
- wets the bed
- soils clothes
- drugs
- alcohol
- self-harm
- thoughts about suicide

Children who are sexually abused may...

Stay away from certain people

- *they might avoid being alone with people, such as family members or friends*
- *they could seem frightened of a person or reluctant to socialise with them.*

Show sexual behaviour that's inappropriate for their age

- *a child might become sexually active at a young age*
- *they might be promiscuous*
- *they could use sexual language or know information that you wouldn't expect them to.*

Have physical symptoms

- *anal or vaginal soreness*
- *an unusual discharge*
- *sexually transmitted infection (STI)*
- *pregnancy.*

What can I do as a parent or a carer?

As a parent or carer, it is important to discuss with children the differences between healthy and unhealthy relationships to help highlight potential risks to them.

Tell your child that he or she has done the right thing in telling you. Find a way to let them know that you are really glad they have told you, how difficult it must have been to deal with on their own, and that you are there to help them. Children or teenagers can end up feeling like they were somehow responsible and that they themselves would get into trouble.

You should seek medical advice immediately if you see physical signs, such as:

- Unexplained soreness or bruises around the child's genitals
- Symptoms of sexually transmitted infections.

There are also a number of practical steps you can take to protect children such as:

- staying alert to changes in behaviour or any physical signs of abuse such as bruising
- being aware of new, unexplained gifts or possessions and carefully monitoring any episodes of staying out late or not returning home
- exercising caution around older friends your child may have, or relationships with other young people where there appears to be a power imbalance
- making sure you understand the risks associated with your child being online and putting measures in place to minimise these risks.

LEARN THE UNDERWEAR RULE



P RIVATES ARE PRIVATE

A LWAYS REMEMBER YOUR BODY BELONGS TO YOU

N O MEANS NO

T ALK ABOUT SECRETS THAT UPSET YOU

S PEAK UP, SOMEONE CAN HELP

ChildLine
0800 1111

NSPCC
Crucial to children must stop. FULL STOP.

Parents and Carers should think about the places where abuse might happen and think through the potential risks in different locations.

Online

We know that children can be vulnerable to sexual abuse and inappropriate content in the online world. There are tools that can be used to keep online spaces safe for children such as parental controls and filtering software.

Physical environments

Adults can make sure children are kept safe by checking on areas that are infrequently used or left unsupervised such as quiet corridors or outdoor spaces. We can also make sure everywhere is well lit.

Supervised locations

We must ensure we only allow suitable people to work with children. At home this could mean ensuring the babysitter has trusted references.

Keeping Children Safe from Sexual Abuse

Knowing when a child or family need help requires someone to recognise that there are signs or indicators of sexual abuse.

If you think a child is at risk of harm or abuse contact Children's Social Care on

- 01733 864170 (for Peterborough)
- 0345 045 1362 (for Cambridgeshire)
- 01733 234724 (Out of Hours Emergency Duty Team)

If a child is in immediate danger, call 999 or contact your local police.

Useful Contacts

Children Social Care	
Peterborough	01733 864180
Cambridgeshire	0345 045 5203
Out of Hours (Emergency Duty Team)	01733 234724
Cambridgeshire Constabulary	101
If a child / young person is in immediate danger call 999	
NSPCC	0808 800 5000

The NSPCC have produced some resources for Schools, Teachers and Parents / Carers to help teach children to stay safe from Sexual Abuse by using 'The Underwear Rule'

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/keeping-children-safe/underwear-rule/>



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