

CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE PRACTITIONER TOOLKIT

Centre of Expertise on Sexual Abuse have found (CSA) found that children are the victims in 40% of all sexual offences – including rape and sexual assault – yet make up just 20% of the population in England & Wales.

2022/23 analysis by the CSA Centre highlights that whilst there have been small improvements, the level of child sexual abuse identified by official agencies remains broadly similar to the previous year and some elements of the response, such as numbers of children placed on child protection plans, appears to be getting worse.

In 2022/23, child protection plans for sexual abuse were at the lowest levels in 14 years, with 2,290 children supported through such plans. Furthermore, sexual abuse made up the lowest proportion of new child protection plans since records began; just 3.6% in 2022/23, in comparison with 23% in 1993/4. This is despite surveys indicating that children are just as likely to experience sexual abuse as other forms of abuse, such as emotional or physical abuse.

We know this is a national issue and certainly Birmingham are not exempt, which is why this pathway is being developed.

There is a suggestion from the CSA findings that here remains a 'postcode lottery': where children live affects the likelihood that their sexual abuse will be identified and responded to.

In Birmingham, this is not the narrative we want our children and families to have (when a child suffers sexual abuse in Birmingham or is a resident in Birmingham). Our goal is to ensure they are supported and receive the best support and intervention required to reduce any future harm or impact this has on the rest of their lives.

CSA have estimated that half a million children will experience some form of sexual abuse every year in England & Wales. Ultimately this means that the gap between the number of children being sexually abused and the identification and response by statutory agencies remains far too wide.

CSA suggests children under 5, are less likely to be subject to a child protection plan under the category of sexual abuse than older children, this could be due to their level of understanding and ability to communicate.

The scale of child sexual abuse compared with agencies' identification of it

2,300 children on a child protection plan due to child sexual abuse (England)

9,500 children seen by sexual assault referral centres (England and Wales)

49,000 children assessed at risk of sexual abuse* (England)

105,000 child sexual abuse offences recorded by the police (England and Wales)

5000,000 child sexual abuse offences recorded by the police (England and Wales)

This toolkit is:

- for professionals working with children in Birmingham and Solihull. This includes those working in education, healthcare, social services and police,
- to aid with decision making when a child has made a disclosure of sexual abuse or where there is a suspicion of child sexual abuse (excluding child sexual exploitation)
- for guidance only and does not cover every situation. *You should seek further advice including conversation with your local Children's Advice Support Services/Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (CASS/MASH) Team. Where child sexual abuse is suspected see Sexual Assaults Referral Centres (SARC) Pathway.*

What is child sexual abuse.

When a child or young person is sexually abused, they're forced, tricked or manipulated into sexual activities. They might not understand that what's happening is abuse or that it's wrong for the abuser to do this to them. They might be afraid to tell someone or behave as though this is normal for them to experience, both are valid for the child to be displaying. Sexual abuse can happen anywhere – and it can happen in person or online.

It's never a child's fault they were sexually abused – it's important to make sure children know this. NSPCC 2024.

Signs of Sexual Abuse

Knowing the signs of sexual abuse can help give a voice to children and can get support for that child earlier on. Sometimes children won't understand that what's happening to them is wrong. Or they might be scared to speak out. Some of the signs you might notice include: The signs below are not an exhaustive list and individual children may present with other signs.

Physical Signs

- Bruises.
- Bleeding, discharge, pains or soreness in their genital or anal area.
- Sexually transmitted infections, including in the throat.
- Pain/soreness in throat
- Pregnancy.
- Difficulty in walking/sitting that are not usual for the child.

Emotional and Behavioural Signs

- Avoiding being alone with or frightened of people or a person they know.
- Language or sexual behaviour you wouldn't expect them to know.
- Having nightmares or bed-wetting.
- Alcohol or drug misuse.
- Self-harm.
- Changes in eating habits or developing an eating problem.
- Changes in their mood, feeling irritable and angry, or anything out of the ordinary.
- Change in normal behaviour for the child, for example suddenly not attending education or avoiding wanting to go home/running away.

How to respond if a child tells you they are being sexually abused.

- listen carefully to what they're saying
- don't push them too much, but allow them to talk freely or answer
- let them know they've done the right thing by telling you
- tell them know it's not their fault
- say you'll take them seriously
- don't confront the alleged abuser
- explain what you'll do next
- report what the child has told you as soon as possible
- decide if they need medical attention.

Impact of Child Sexual Abuse.

Sexual abuse can have both short and long-term effects.

The impact of sexual abuse can last a lifetime. Children, young people and adults may live with:

- anxiety and depression
- eating disorders
- post-traumatic stress
- difficulty coping with stress
- self-harm
- suicidal thoughts and suicide
- flashbacks or nightmares
- sexually transmitted infections
- pregnancy
- feelings of shame, guilt and isolation
- drug and alcohol problems
- relationship problems with family, friends and partners.

Additional Recommended Reading for Practitioners.

<https://www.csacentre.org.uk/app/uploads/2024/02/Trends-in-Offical-Data-2022-23-FINAL.pdf>

[CSA data Power BI.msg](#)

[CSA pathway draft 2 \(003\).odt](#)

<https://www.zoelodrick.co.uk/about>

Suggested Training for Practitioners

Resources, safety planning and guidance for education providers:

[Resources for education settings | CSA Centre](#)

Advice for professionals working with children who present with HSB:

[Advice for professionals - Work in child protection - Stop It Now](#)

Staying safe online guidance & resources/ internet controls for parents/ removing images:

[CEOP Education](#)

[Keep Children Safe Online: Information, Advice, Support - Internet Matters](#)

[Report Remove | Childline](#)

Understanding and categorising HSB:

[Understanding sexualised behaviour in children | NSPCC Learning](#)

Support for teenagers presenting with HSB: [Home - Shore \(shorespace.org.uk\)](#)

Support for families/ Sibling Sexual Abuse guidance: [Parents Protect](#)

[Sibling sexual abuse and behaviour | CSA Centre](#)

NSPCC 'Pants' rule for children: <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/support-for-parents/pants-underwear-rule/>

Further support services in and around Birmingham: the-waitingroom.org

Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARC)

<https://horizonsarc.org.uk/useful-resources/>

[West Mids CYP Service -Social Care.pptx](#)

Support Services for children and Families

https://csacentre.learnupon.com/users/sign_in