

# Child Sexual Abuse

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## What is Child Sexual Abuse?

*It involves 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.*

*It 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 2015)*

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## Prevalence

- 425,000 victims of CSA between April 2012 and March 2014 (OCC 2015)
- 11% of 18-24 year olds were victims of contact sexual abuse during childhood (NSPCC 2011)
- We can expect 18,883 of Norfolk's 167,114 (ONS 2014) children to be the victim of contact sexual abuse during their childhood
- 90% abused by someone they knew (NSPCC 2011)
- Two thirds within the direct family
- Only 1 in 8 come to the attention of statutory authorities (OCC 2014)
- Between 2012 & 2015 the average annual increase in CSA cases has been 24% (University of Bedfordshire)

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## CSA Strategy

- NSCB Priority
- Four Strands of Activity in CSA Strategy
  - (i) **Awareness Raising**
  - (ii) **Training and Development**
  - (iii) **Resources**
  - (iv) **Leadership and Governance**

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**Barriers to Disclosure of Abuse**

- Self-blame: This may be a result of grooming
- Fear of consequences & loyalty to other family members
- Fear of the perpetrator
- Being judged
- Lack of opportunity to tell someone they trust
- Distrust of professionals
  
- Disclosure (or telling) can take a very long time (for example, 7.80 years on average); sometimes never at all
- Children tried to tell on average 4 times
- The younger a child at the age abuse starts the longer to disclosure

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**What Facilitates Disclosure?**

- Recognising abuse (sometimes simply by getting older, talking to friends)
- Being believed
- Being noticed, Trust; having someone to talk to
- Abuse getting worse

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**Indicators & Signs of CSA**

- Knowledge or interest in sexual acts inappropriate to their age
- Use of sexual language inappropriate to their age
- Asking others to behave sexually or play sexual games
- Physical sexual health problems, including soreness in the genital and anal areas, sexually transmitted infections or underage pregnancy
- Displaying signs & symptoms of depression
- Self-harm or suicide attempts
- Making strong efforts to avoid specific family members or friends, without an obvious reason
- Concern for younger siblings without explaining why

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**Indicators & Signs of CSA**

- Talking about running away or actually running away
- Shying away from being touched or flinching at sudden movements
- Becoming isolated or withdrawn
- Displaying personality changes such as becoming insecure or clingy
- Problems with sleeping including nightmares and bedwetting
- Unexpected changes in behaviour, including being anxious, aggressive and obsessive
- Eating disorders
- Use of drugs & alcohol

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**What Should We Do About It?**

- Be alive to signs, indicators and disclosures (may not always be obvious)
- Talk openly about it with children (talk PANTS)
- Discuss concerns with safeguarding leads/MASH consultation
- If urgent call the police on 999
- Otherwise make referral to MASH on 0344 800 8020
- If child does not have a social worker then a referral coordinator will obtain details for new referral (NSCB1)
- New NSCB Threshold Guide for more information

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**What Will Happen?**

- Consideration of multi-agency information
- Strategy discussion under S.47 of the Children Act 1989
- Joint Police & Children's Services investigation
- Potential for criminal prosecution, Initial Child Protection Conference, Care Proceedings

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**Changes of Approach**

- Old approach very heavily reliant on child repeating disclosure immediately
- Now take a considered approach through use of intermediaries & advanced training for Child Protection officers
- Witness under 10 years old protocol
- Specially trained RASSO CPS lawyers
- NFA process if unable to pursue criminal prosecution

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**Resources**

- Toolkit (launching in June) has advice and information on:
  - Prevention
  - Recognition
  - Harmful sexual behaviour
  - Grooming
  - Reporting
  - Support
- NSCB Website has further information

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