



# Child Sexual Abuse

**Guide for Professionals**

## 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, 2015)*

*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).'*

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) are all forms of Child Sexual Abuse

## 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 the 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
- takes risks
- suddenly behaves differently
- misses school
- anxious
- changes in eating habits
- clingy
- obsessive behaviour
- depressed
- nightmares
- aggressive
- drugs
- alcohol

- problems sleeping
- eating disorders
- wets the bed
- soils clothes
- 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.*

# LEARN THE UNDERWEAR RULE



AND YOU'VE GOT  
IT COVERED!



**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



# What can I do as a professional?

Protecting children and young people involves professionals in the difficult task of analysing complex information about human behaviour and risk. It is rarely straightforward and responses should be based on robust assessment, sound professional judgement and where appropriate statutory guidance.

Professionals who work with children and young people often struggle to identify which sexual behaviours are potentially harmful and which represent healthy sexual development.

The Brook Sexual behaviours Traffic Light Tool supports professionals working with children and young people by helping them to identify and respond appropriately to sexual behaviours.

The tool uses a traffic light system to categorise the sexual behaviours of young people and is designed to help professionals:

- Make decisions about safeguarding children and young people
- Assess and respond appropriately to sexual behaviour in children and young people
- Understand healthy sexual development and distinguish it from harmful behaviour

By categorising sexual behaviours as green, amber or red, professionals across different agencies can work to the same standardised criteria when making decisions and can protect children and young people with a unified approach.

[https://www.brook.org.uk/brook\\_tools/traffic/Brook\\_Traffic\\_Light\\_Tool.pdf](https://www.brook.org.uk/brook_tools/traffic/Brook_Traffic_Light_Tool.pdf)

## Consent

Where a practitioner is requesting support of services on behalf of a child or family, they require consent beforehand – this is regardless of whether they are seeking support from Early Help Services or from Children’s Social Care for child in need services. Where the referral

relates to immediate safeguarding concerns, and professionals are concerned that seeking consent may place the child at risk of significant harm, consent is not required and contact should be made with Children's Social Care as soon as possible. The reason for not informing the parents or carers of the referral should be clearly recorded by the professional.

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

Other resources related to Child Sexual Abuse available on the Safeguarding Board Website

**Female Genital Mutilation** - involves the partial or total removal of external female genitalia for non-medical reasons and is a form of CSA and violence against women and girls.  
<http://www.safeguardingpeterborough.org.uk/children-board/professionals/fgm-2/>

**Online Abuse** - For further information regarding Online abuse please see the CPSCB Online safeguarding strategy  
<http://www.safeguardingpeterborough.org.uk/children-board/professionals/onlinesafety/>

**Child Sexual Exploitation** - Multi agency working around the area of CSE is underpinned by the CSE strategy and accompanying resources. For further information relating to CSE please refer to CSE Strategy  
<http://www.safeguardingpeterborough.org.uk/children-board/professionals/child-sexual-exploitation/>

**Sexually Harmful Behaviour** - For further information regarding recognising and responding to children who display harmful sexual behaviour please refer to the Harmful Sexual Behaviour Policy  
<http://www.safeguardingpeterborough.org.uk/children-board/professionals/procedures/shb/>

# Useful Contacts

Children Social Care  
Peterborough 01733 864170  
Cambridgeshire 0345 045 1362  
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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[www.safeguardingpeterborough.org.uk](http://www.safeguardingpeterborough.org.uk)