Child Sexual Abuse: The challenges, the myths and what WE can do about it

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Centre of expertise on child sexual abuse

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The Centre of expertise on child sexual abuse

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Aims of the session

• Understanding the scale of CSA

• The challenges and the myths

• Considering impact

• What we can do about it
To start off..

- Who are the CSA victims you see in your daily work? (e.g. gender, ethnicity, age)

- Who are the perpetrators? (e.g. gender, ethnicity, age)

- What is the context in which the abuse takes place?
  - Locations
  - Relationship between the perpetrator and victim
What do we see in practice context? Tip of the iceberg

What do we know and not know?

- The level of CSA self-reported in surveys is far higher than the level recorded by agencies.
- How much the rate of disclosure of CSA has changed over time is unknown.
- Agency data cannot be compared properly because the police publish data on offences and children’s services record children.
- We do not know how the online context is affecting the scale of CSA/VE.

3,020 children on child protection plans for sexual abuse in England and Wales in 2016/17
Source: Department of Education Children In Need census 2016/17 and Welsh Government Children Receiving Care and Support census 2016/17

29,600 children assessed at risk of CSA by children’s services in England in 2016/17
Source: Department for Education Children In Need census 2016/17

65,548 CSA offences recorded by police in England and Wales in 2016/17
Source: Police recorded crime and outcomes open data tables, updated 25 January 2018

785,000 children aged 11-17 experienced any type of sexual abuse during their childhood;
228,000 experienced contact sexual abuse in their childhood (2009)
Source: Radford et al 2011, Childhood abuse and neglect in the UK today. Figures calculated using reported rates of victimisation and extrapolated using ONS mid-2009 population figures.

To read the full report, please visit www.csacentre.org.uk
Trends in agency data – not showing how prevalent abuse is but how many identified / recorded / reported

### Police forces publish data on offences

Source: Police recorded crime and outcomes open data tables. Police recorded crime includes non-recent offences.

### Child protection agencies publish data on children

Source: Department for Education, Children in Need census; Welsh Children Receiving Care and Support census

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2004/5</td>
<td>2,875</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005/6</td>
<td>2,460</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006/7</td>
<td>2,855</td>
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<tr>
<td>2007/8</td>
<td>2,990</td>
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<td>2008/9</td>
<td>3,020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009/10</td>
<td>21,218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010/11</td>
<td>28,897</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011/12</td>
<td>65,548</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**What do we not know?**

- Why are the numbers of children on child protection plans for CSA stable but police recorded crime is significantly increasing?
- Non-recent cases accounted for 27% of all sexual offences recorded by the police in 2016/17 – but how much of the CSA recorded was non-recent?
- How many CSA victims report to the police?
- How much actual CSE is being dealt with by agencies?
Children on child protection register by category of abuse in England, 1993/4-2016/7
Regional variation in the number of children on protection plan for CSA – social care data
Regional variation in number of CSA offences – police data
The majority of most serious sexual abuse committed by known adults, 42% by family members

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sexual assault by rape or penetration (including attempts)</th>
<th>Other sexual assault</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Percentage(^1)</td>
<td>Percentage(^1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Men</td>
<td>Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step-father</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step-mother</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other family member</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner or previous partner(^2)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friend or acquaintance(^3)</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Person in position of trust or authority, e.g. teacher, doctor, carer, youth worker</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stranger</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Someone else</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't know/can't remember</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't wish to answer</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Police investigation outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crime Type</th>
<th>Charged/Summoned</th>
<th>Evidential Difficulties</th>
<th>Prosecution not in Public Interest</th>
<th>No Suspect Identified</th>
<th>Investigation Transferred</th>
<th>Totals</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sexual grooming</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1,06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abuse of position of trust</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abuse through CSE</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>586</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obscene publications etc</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>16,152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rape of a female under 13</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4,280</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sexual assault on female u 13</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>7,785</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rape of a male under 13</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1,946</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rape of a male under 16</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>692</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rape of a female under 16</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>5,289</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual assault on male u 13</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2,960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual activity with u 16</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>12,571</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual activity with u 13</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>7,235</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How times change…

- Freud
- Cleveland Inquiry
- ‘false memory syndrome’
- The Catholic Church
- Child Sexual Exploitation
- Jimmy Savile & BBC
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They are not all the same

“Sex offenders are a heterogeneous group with few shared characteristics apart from a predilection for deviant sexual behaviour…there is no profile of a typical child molester”.

(Myers, 1989)

“The most striking characteristic of sex offenders is there apparent normality”.

(Herman, 1990)
Assumptions that follow the Myths…

That men who are ‘good with children’ do not sexually abuse them

That women don’t abuse

That if children say they want to see their abusive parent, they cannot be abusing them

That the perceived ‘better parent’ cannot be abusing the child

That if children don’t appear distressed when making a disclosure, then it must be untrue
The Obstacle of Fear

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A bit of a Mine Field

Asking questions

Contaminating evidence
Issues with the current system

Reliance on verbal disclosure (not in line with research):
- more likely to show us than tell us
- need to ask direct questions
- what about disabled children?

Current system (not child focussed):
- investigation confirms perpetrators’ threats
- staggered nature of disclosures
- legal system not taking account of recall or trauma
The Burden of Proof

Beyond Reasonable Doubt

Balance of Probabilities
Roles: Police vs Children’s Services

While we all have a role in safeguarding children, our roles are very different. For best practice, our roles should compliment each other in order for children to be supported and safeguarded.
Police Role

The police role is primarily to **safeguard** and then to **investigate**. Part of that investigation is to establish if there is sufficient evidence to support a successful outcome*

The child’s capacity to give verbal evidence in court is key – the ABE is the ‘evidence in chief’

Their decision to take ‘no further action’ is NOT the same as ‘the abuse didn’t happen’

It is instead, ‘there is not enough evidence to support a prosecution (at this time)’

Their legal context is ‘**beyond reasonable doubt**’

*This may or may not be a charge, e.g. a successful outcome CAN be that the victim is made safe and a young person receives intervention in respect of harmful sexual behaviour*
Children’s Services Role

Our role is to **safeguard** and **support** children in need and in need of protection.

We work in a legal context of ‘**on the balance of probabilities**’

We have a therapeutic role with children.

It is through our **relationships** with children and families that we need to reduce risks and build strengths.
Survivor, aged 41

“I don’t know why it started and I don’t know why it stopped…I still don’t know really, no one ever spoke with me about it”.

[Image]
Thinking about the Impact
The Impact of Child Sexual Abuse

- Sexual abuse can affect every aspect of a child’s development
- Individuals are affected differently and to varying degrees
- 10 – 53% show no psychological ill-effects into adulthood (Domhart et al, 2015)

Some key indicators of level of impact are:

- **The nature of the abuse**
- **Whether the abuse is chronic**
- **The relationship between child and perpetrator**
- **The nature of the child’s previous life experiences**
- **The support within the family and wider support networks**
- **The child’s inherent resilience**

**REMEMBER: ABUSE IS NOT DESTINY**
Child sexual abuse is strongly associated with the following adverse outcomes across the life-course (Fisher et al, 2017):

- **Poor mental health and wellbeing** (One in Four, 2015; Chen et al, 2010)
- **Physical health problems** including immediate impacts and long term illness and disability (Heger et al, 2002; Allnock et al, 2015)
- **Externalising behaviours** such as substance misuse, ‘risky’ sexual behaviours, and offending (One in Four, 2015)
- **Difficulties in interpersonal relationships** (Kia-Keating et al, 2010; Sabmann et al, 2012)
- **Parenting** (Fitzgerald et al, 2010; Kim et al, 2010)
- **Socio-economic impacts** including lower levels of education and income (Booden et al, 2007; Pereira and Power, 2017)
- **Vulnerability to re-victimisation** both as children and adults (Filipas, 2006; Finkelhor et al, 2007)
I joined in

I encouraged it

It was something about me

I should have told someone

I should have stopped it

I enjoyed it

I could have protected my siblings

I could have protected my siblings
Impact on Family

Guilt

Blame

Torn loyalties

Distress

Anger

Jealousy

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What can WE do about it?
We need to...

- Have a better understanding of each other’s roles
- Communicate with one another (SW to OIC)
- Take our responsibility seriously
- Advocate for the needs of the children we work with
Dialogical Nature of Disclosure

We think about disclosure as the act of a child telling someone (i.e. a one-way process)

Such a unidirectional view does not recognize the relational and social-interactional context of disclosure
However…

“children do not tell, delay, recant, or reaffirm accounts of their sexual victimization in a vacuum”

(Flam and Haugstvedt, 2013 in A. M. Reitsema and H. Grietens, 2016)
Dialogical Nature of Disclosure

Instead, disclosure develops through an interplay between children’s signs and expressions and the reactions of the adults around them.

Children receive information on how adults respond to them, they process and evaluate this information, and they base their reactions on this.
Disabled Children

Vulnerability of disabled children is not reflected in level of child protection plans

Disabled children 3 x more likely to experience abuse (Jones et al, 2012)

Attempts to ‘tell’ were sometimes seen as symptomatic of a diagnosed condition (Taskforce, 2010)

Need to ensure disabled children have the means to disclose
Applying the Research
(‘No one listened, no one heard’ NSPCC, 2015)

What prompts disclosures?

• When someone noticed the signs and impact of abuse and asked about it

What prevents disclosures?

• Not understanding abuse, isolation, fear, shame

Counteracting perpetrator tactics

• Education, information, supporting non-abusing parent, addressing vulnerabilities
The Views of Survivors
(‘Yes you can! Working with Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse’, 2nd Ed, Nelson, S. & Hampson, S. 2008)

• ‘Help us to tell’
  
  • If professionals keep waiting for clients ‘to be ready’, they may wait forever.

• ‘Please don’t assume we’re too vulnerable’

• ‘Survivors value all kinds of time’

• ‘We’re not looking for great experts, we want a human being…’
CSA Centre Leads’ Programme Pilot

AIM:
• To build confidence and competence of SWs in managing CSA cases

BY:
• developing the knowledge and skills of individual PLs (training sessions and reflective learning groups);
• supporting PLs to disseminate learning throughout their teams/organisation; and,
• facilitating the LA to develop an internal culture/system of learning and development (within LA’s current structures), linked to the Centre, which supports ongoing best practice in CSA
• Supporting the development of multi-agency networks

WITH:
• 4 LAs (3 in England, 1 in Wales)
To Summarise: Top Tips

- Disclosure happens within a context of which we are a key part
- See evidence as broader than verbal disclosure
- Remember we **all** have a role in protecting children
- Build relationships (with children, families and professional colleagues)
- Be professionally curious and ask questions
- Educate (ourselves and others)
- Apply knowledge and research to practice
- Address vulnerabilities holistically
- Talk about it!
Any Questions?

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