

The Myth...



The Biggest Myth about Child Abuse

The biggest myth is that the dangers to children come from strangers. In most cases, the perpetrator is someone the parent or child knows, and is often trusted by the child and family.



Background

► Maltreatment prevalence

- Affects millions of children worldwide
- Difficult to estimate true prevalence
 - Many cases never come to light
 - Existing estimates vary widely
 - Community studies vs. official reports
- **UK:** up to 1 in 5 experience severe maltreatment

(NSPCC; Radford et al., 2011)



CHILD MALTREATMENT

There are about 190 million children aged under 18 in the WHO European Region

18 million have experienced **sexual abuse**

44 million have experienced **physical abuse**

55 million have experienced **mental abuse**



90%
of all abuse goes
undetected

Prevent child maltreatment

- Help families at risk
- Promote positive parenting
- Implement home visits by nurses
- Decrease alcohol dependence
- Stop corporal punishment

THE REALITY

1 in 10 Children 
WILL BE SEXUALLY ABUSED BEFORE THE AGE OF 18.

1 in 5 Children  **ARE SOLICITED SEXUALLY WHILE ON THE INTERNET** 



OF CHILDREN ARE SEXUALLY ABUSED BEFORE THE AGE OF 8



OF CHILDREN ARE ABUSED BY A FAMILY MEMBER OR SOMEONE THEY KNOW AND TRUST



OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE VICTIMS NEVER TELL ANYONE

THE ALARMING STATS ABOUT CHILD PROTECTION

In all its forms, child abuse is largely hidden from public eye. As high as the statistics seem, the reality is probably even worse. EduCare, the leading provider of duty of care and safeguarding training, is here with some of the most alarming stats about child protection in the UK that must be addressed.

IN 2014/15...

Sexual offences against children in the UK

INCREASED BY 38%



The worldwide removal of URLs containing child abuse images

INCREASED BY 118%

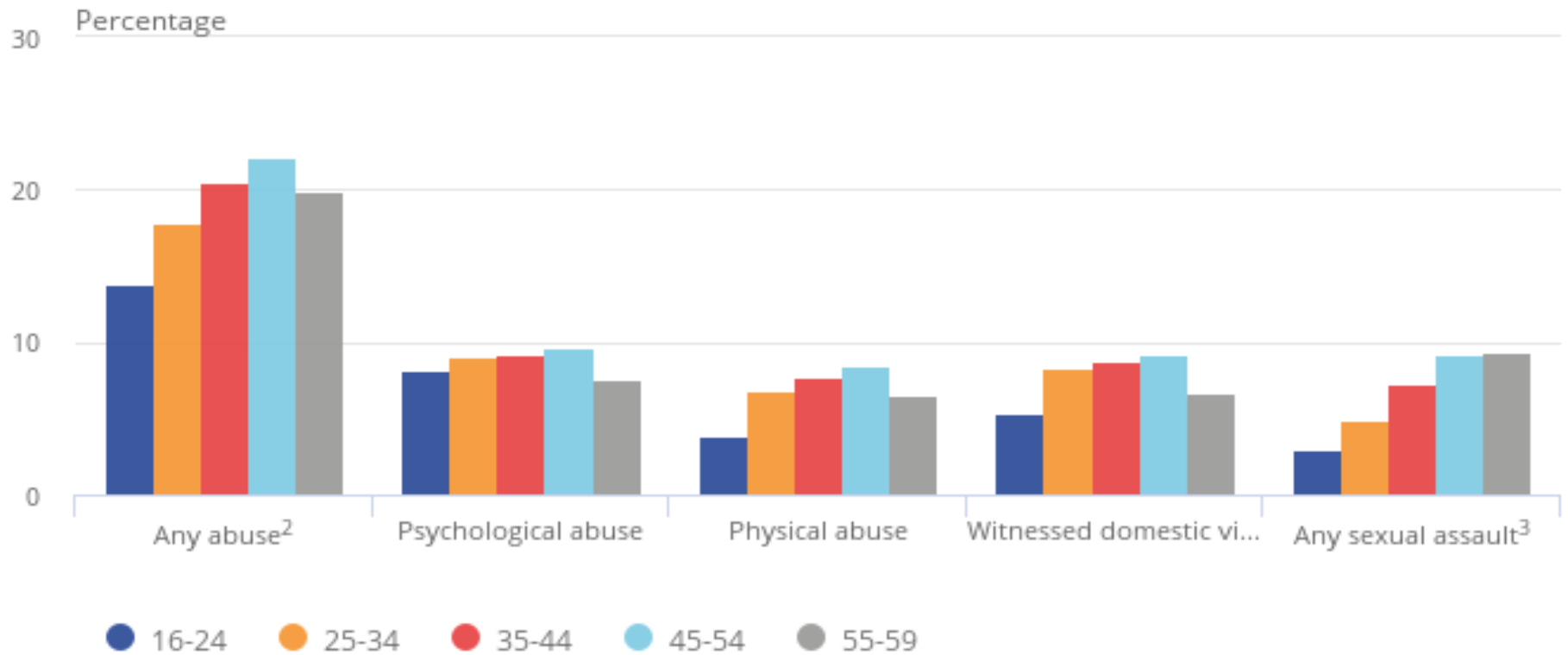


ChildLine counselling sessions about sexting and cyberbullying

INCREASED BY 15%



Figure 3: Proportion of adults who experienced abuse during childhood by abuse type and age group, year ending March 2016 CSEW^{1,2,3}



Source: Crime Survey for England and Wales, Office for National Statistics

Child deaths due to abuse or neglect

(NSPCC: March 2019)

In the last five years there was an average of 68 child deaths by assault or undetermined intent a year in the UK.

On average at least one child is killed a week in the UK.

Children under the age of one are the most likely age group to be killed by another person, followed by young men.

Child homicides are most commonly caused by the child's parent or step-parent.

In 2017, 71 child (under 15) deaths by assault/undetermined: 62 in England, 5 in Scotland and

In 2016/17 - 98 child (under 18) homicides: 91 in England (22 were victims of the 1989 Hillsborough disaster) 4 in Scotland and 3 in Wales.

From 2012/13 – 2016/17 - average of 76 child homicides a year in the UK.

Child homicides are most commonly (42%) perpetrated by the child's

Harmful sexual behaviour (NSPCC: February 2019)

The NSPCC defines HSB as developmentally inappropriate sexual behaviour displayed by children and young people. It can be displayed towards younger children, peers, older children or adults, and is harmful to the children and young people who display it, as well as the people it is directed towards

- ▶ Around a third of child sexual abuse is by other children or young people.
- ▶ There is some cross-over between online and offline HSB and between child sexual exploitation and HSB.
- ▶ Most commonly identified in adolescent boys, but girls and younger children can also exhibit HSB.
- ▶ A significant proportion also have a learning disability.
- ▶ The majority have themselves experienced trauma, including abuse or neglect.
- ▶ The majority do not become sexual offenders as adults.
- ▶ They often experience other emotional, behavioural and peer related difficulties.

Over 9,000 recorded child sex offences were perpetrated by children in 2016

Hackett (2004) estimated that between one fifth and one third of all child sexual abuse in the UK involves other children and adolescents as perpetrators.

Erooga and Masson (2006) found that HSB constituted a third of all sexual abuse coming to the attention of the professional system in the UK.

Radford et al's 2011 study of child maltreatment in the UK found that 65.9% of contact sexual abuse reported by under 18 year olds was perpetrated by other children and young people under the age of 18.

Child maltreatment as a risk factor for other types of violence

Risk factor for involvement in youth violence

Risk factor for intimate partner and sexual violence as victim and perpetrator

Risk factor for committing child maltreatment as a parent



Neglect has a wide-ranging impact on children.



Damaging affect on **all of the developmental needs** of a child, including physical, socio-emotional, cognitive and behavioural development (Horwath, 2007).

The way in which a child's brain develops depends on care-giving experiences, and there are certain '**sensitive**' periods when parts of the brain will not develop without the correct form of stimulation or environmental conditions (Schore, 2002).

At primary school age, they are more likely to be **socially isolated**, lack social skills and appear withdrawn (Hildyard and Wolfe, 2002).

Poor hygiene
Hunger and fatigue

Apathy

Achieve less well
educationally

(Berry et al, 2003)

Outcomes for neglected children

- ▶ In infancy and preschool, neglected children are more likely to show **inadequate growth and failure to thrive**, more extreme mood swings, non-compliance and less positive affect (Howe, 2005).
- ▶ Neglect interferes with the acquisition of emotional understanding and **emotion regulation**.
- ▶ Neglected children may also **crave physical contact** and attention and hence may be prey to sexual abusers (Horwath, 2007).
- ▶ By adolescence, neglected children are more likely to have **dropped out of school** and be involved in substance misuse (Eriksson and Egeland, 2002).
- ▶ They may continue to be **socially withdrawn**, are more likely to be bullied, and may be likely to **attempt suicide** (Cullingford and Morrison, 1997).
- ▶ There is also a higher rate of **antisocial and violent behaviour** among adolescents who have experienced neglect (Smith et al, 2005).

In adulthood...

Relationship difficulties = Social isolation or problematic relationships with frequent crises and breakups (Horwarth, 2007).



Women are also more than **twice as likely** as other women to experience depression, more frequently have a teenage pregnancy, and are more likely to be in adult relationships characterised by **domestic violence** (Bifulco and Moran, 1989).





Impairment across lifespan

Injury

Affect
regulation

Attachment

Growth

Developmental
delay

Anxiety disorders
including PTSD

Mood disorders

Disruptive
behaviour disorders
(e.g. ADHD)

Academic failure

Poor peer relations

Conduct disorder

Alcohol abuse

Drug abuse

Other risk-taking
behaviours

Recurrent
victimization

Personality
disorders

Relationship
problems

Employment
problems

Chronic disease
including heart
disease, cancer

Infancy

Childhood

Adolescence

Adulthood

The impact on well-being

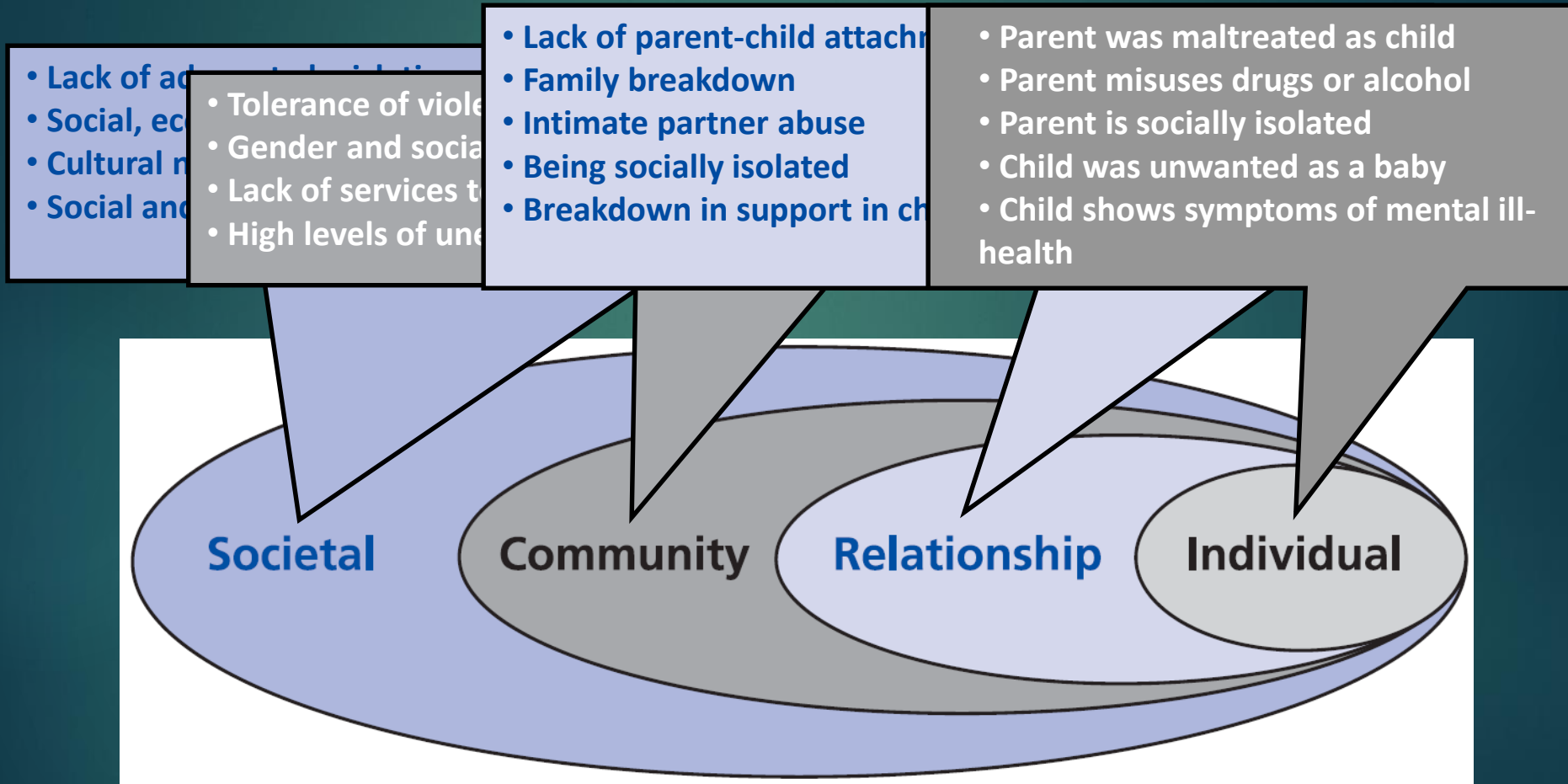
Mental health problems such as anxiety, *depression*, substance misuse, eating disorders, self-injurious behaviour, anger and aggression, sexual symptoms and age-inappropriate sexual behaviour (Lanktree et al, 2008).



Panic disorder, dissociative disorders, attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder, and reactive attachment disorder (Teicher, 2000; De Bellis and Thomas, 2003; Springer et al, 2007).

Children who experience rejection or neglect are more likely to develop **antisocial** traits as they grow up and are more associated with borderline personality disorders and violent behaviour (Schore, 2003).

Risk factors for child maltreatment



Educational risk factors

Increased risk of educational **underachievement**, including lower verbal and math scores.(Boden, Horwood, & Fergusson, 2007)

Poorer academic performance than physically maltreated children.(Lowenthal, 2000)

Higher rates of absenteeism from school than non-maltreated peers (Fantuzzo, Perlman, & Dobbins, 2011).

Substantially higher risk than non-maltreated children of **repeating a grade** (Daignault & Hébert, 2008).

Increased risk of **dropping out of school** before high school graduation (Widom, 2000)

More likely to be referred for **special education services**.(Gilbert, Widom, Browne, Fergusson, Webb & Janson, 2009)

More likely than their peers to **exhibit poor social skills and classroom behaviour problems**.(Fantuzzo, Perlman, & Dobbins, 2011)

A child's risk of poor academic functioning is substantially **heightened by multiple victimizations**.(Schwartz, Lansford, Dodge, Pettit, & Bates, 2013)

Buckle, Lancaster, Powell Higgins (2005)

Eighty-one adolescent psychiatric inpatients participated in the study (aged 12–18 years).

Examined the relationship between sexual abuse and academic achievement in an adolescent inpatient psychiatric population.

Measures - tests of academic achievement and intelligence, self-report measures - experience of different types of maltreatment, perception of the parenting they received, socio-economic status, substance abuse, and psychopathology.

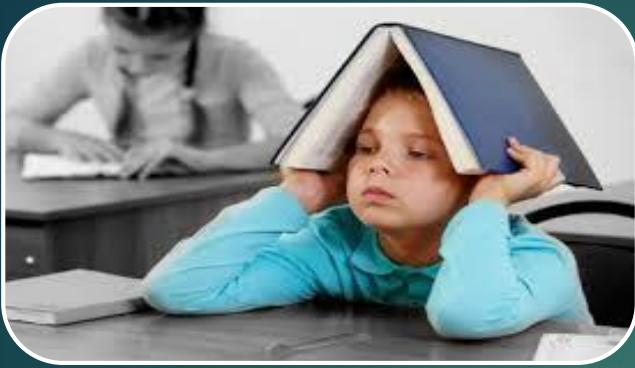
Results

Intelligence was the main predictor of academic achievement.

Interactions- intelligence, substance abuse, internalizing behaviour problems, externalizing behaviour problems all influenced the relationship between sexual abuse and academic achievement.

Examining the impact of sexual abuse is **complex** because it is typically an experience embedded in a **range of other risk factors**, such as poverty, family dysfunction, and other types of maltreatment.

Cooheya, Rennera, Zhangc, and Whitneyd (2001)



Not all children are negatively affected by maltreatment, and some children seem to succeed academically despite being maltreated.

Looked at a range of potential risk, promotive, and protective factors within children and their environments along with characteristics of the maltreatment to account for variability in test scores.

Results: Chronic maltreatment, poorer daily living skills, and lower intelligence explained a substantial proportion of the variance in maltreated children's **math scores** (39%), whereas type of maltreatment, poorer daily living skills and lower intelligence explained a substantial proportion of the variance in **reading scores** (54%) over time.

Contrary to their prediction, having a behaviour problem seemed to protect chronically maltreated children from poorer performance in math over time.

A national longitudinal probability sample of 702 maltreated school-aged children, ages 6–10, and their caregivers was used to predict reading and math scores among maltreated children over three years.

Protective factors: resilience

Not all children exposed to risk factors will succumb to their effects. There are a combination of factors that contribute to resilience.

A retrospective study of women's accounts of childhood (Bifulco and Moran, 1998).

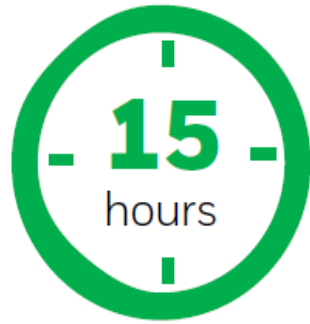
Support - bond with a relative, teacher, family friend or a peer who the child could go to in times of crisis, provide a confiding relationship or act as a role model.

Coping strategies - taking the initiative in managing stressful situations, practical problem solving, planning ahead, and developing positive self-esteem, confidence and optimism.

Meaningful and rewarding roles - typically involved competencies that were likely to enhance self-esteem, such as academic or sporting achievement.

Support, coping strategies, and meaningful or rewarding roles.

How safe are our children online?



5–15 year olds who go online spend an average of 15 hours 18 minutes a week online.



44%

of children aged 5–15 said they owned a smartphone.

90%

of 11–16 year olds surveyed saying they have a social media account.



Facebook
73%

Instagram
65%

WhatsApp
64%

YouTube
60%

Snapchat
57%

Twitter
36%

Skype
19%

TikTok
17%

Twitch
11%

Discord
7%



What are the risks to children on social networks?

the production and distribution of child abuse images

the harmful effects of being exposed to inappropriate content

the growing scale of grooming being facilitated on social networks

unregulated platforms provide new and evolving opportunities to initiate and maintain child abuse.

Groomers can use social networks to target significant numbers of children, and to move them from well-known open platforms to messaging apps and hidden sites.

New types of technology, - livestreaming, have provided new opportunities for groomers to coerce and control children into increasingly extreme forms of abuse

Social networks have repeatedly failed to address these problems – and their unwillingness to do so has ultimately fuelled the scale and extent of the threat

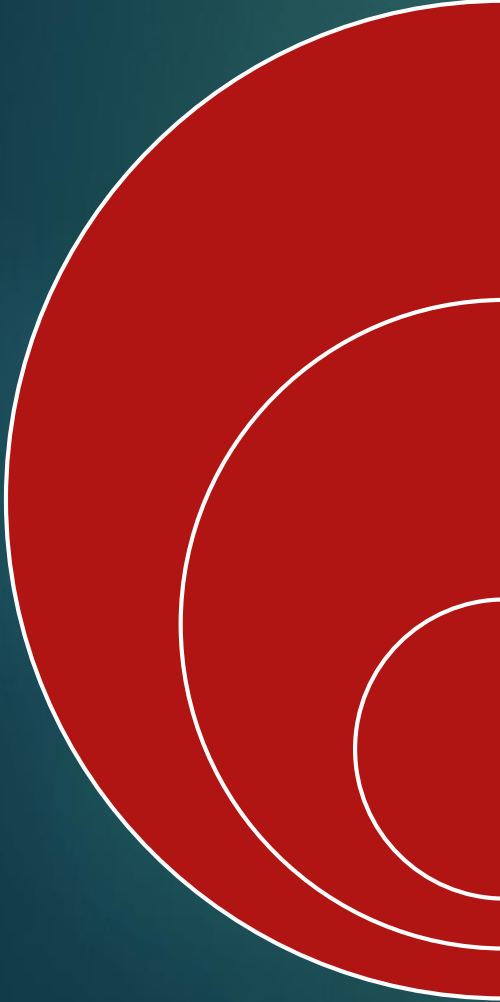
What is online abuse?

- ▶ harassment;
- ▶ stalking;
- ▶ threatening behaviour;
- ▶ creating or sharing child sexual abuse material;
- ▶ inciting a child to sexual activity;
- ▶ sexual exploitation;
- ▶ grooming;
- ▶ sexual communication with a child;
- ▶ causing a child to view images or watch videos of a sexual act.

Survey responses: inappropriate content

1. 16 % - primary school-aged children and 19 % of secondary school students said they had seen content which encouraged people to hurt themselves.
2. 11 to 18 year olds reported seeing sexual content in 16 % of reviews of the most popular social networks, apps and games.
3. 31 % of children aged 12 to 15 reported seeing worrying or nasty online content.

Survey responses: online sexual abuse



21 % of surveyed girls aged 11 to 18 said they had received a request for a sexual image or message.

4 % of surveyed primary school-aged children and 5 % of surveyed secondary-school aged children said they had been sent or shown a naked or semi-naked picture or video from an adult.

2 % of surveyed primary and secondary school-aged children said they had sent a naked or semi-naked picture or video to an adult

Crime statistics: online sexual offences

1. There has been a year on year increase in the number and rate of police-recorded online child sexual offences in England and Wales and Northern Ireland.
2. In the first 18 months since sexual communication with a child became an offence in England and Wales, 5,211 offences against children under the age of 16 have been recorded by police forces.
3. Police in Northern Ireland have recorded 228 offences of sexual communication with a child since the offence was introduced in Northern Ireland in February 2016.
4. In Scotland there has been a 74 per cent increase in the number of police recorded offences of communicating indecently with a child over the past five years, from 247 offences in 2012/13 to 429 in 2017/18.

Crime statistics: child sexual abuse images

1. There were more than 24,000 police-recorded obscene publications or indecent photos offences in the UK in 2017/18.
2. In all four UK nations the numbers of police-recorded offences of obscene publications or indecent photos have increased over the past five years.
3. National Crime Agency data show an 893 per cent increase in the number of UK-related industry reports of child sexual abuse material, primarily from the US-based National Centre for Missing and Exploited Children, over the past five years; from 11,477 in 2013 to 113,948 in 2018.

Survey responses: what needs to be done to improve online safety

1. 41 per cent of 11 to 18 year olds surveyed said that they thought websites, apps and games weren't doing enough to keep them safe online.
2. 92 per cent of 11 to 16 year olds surveyed agreed that social media platforms should be required to protect children from inappropriate content and behaviour.
3. 60 per cent of the British public disagree that social networking sites are doing enough to protect children from adults contacting them to groom them for sexual purposes.
4. 92 per cent of surveyed parents of 11 to 18 year olds said they support making social networks legally responsible for keeping children safe.

Professional bodies - UK

- ▶ Barnardo's - Works with families and children in many ways, including counselling, fostering and adoption, support for young carers, training and disability inclusion.
- ▶ ChildLine - Provides a free and confidential service for children. Helpline 0800 1111.
- ▶ NSPCC (National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children) - Has a number of useful publications. If you are worried about a child, call the NSPCC Helpline on 0808 800 5000.
- ▶ The Hideout - A website offering support and advice to children whose lives are affected by domestic abuse.
- ▶ YoungMinds - provides information and advice on child mental health issues.
- ▶ Young Carers - A website offering support, information and advice for children who also act as carers.
- ▶ Child Abuse Prevention, Child Abuse and Neglect: BASPCAN

References



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- ▶ Source: NSPCC (2013) [Courts unjust to child sexual abuse witnesses](#). NSPCC press release 7 October 2013. London: NSPCC
- ▶ Source: Radford et al (2011) [Child abuse and neglect in the UK today](#). London: NSPCC
- ▶ Source: NSPCC (2013a) [Real life stories: the NSPCC annual report and accounts 2012/13](#). London: NSPCC
- ▶ Office for National Statistics (2013) [Focus on: violent crime and sexual offences, 2011/12](#). London: Office for National Statistics
- ▶ Brandon et al (2013) [Neglect and serious case reviews](#). University of East Anglia/NSPCC
- ▶ NSPCC (2012) [Call for urgent action to stamp out trade of child abuse images](#). NSPCC press release 15 October 2012.
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- ▶ Carlson, B. E. (2000). Children exposed to intimate partner violence: Research findings and implications for intervention. *Trauma, Violence, and Abuse*, 1(4):321- 340.
- ▶ <http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/7997/1/Abused%20prior%20to%20custody.pdf>
- ▶ http://www.actionforchildren.org.uk/media/143188/neglectc_research_evidence_to_inform_practice.pdf
- ▶ <https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/media/1661/statistics-briefing-harmful-sexual-behaviour.pdf>

Activity

In pairs – look at the NSPCC

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/what-is-child-abuse/types-of-abuse/>

Choose one type of abuse.

Then find a journal article to support one of these.

e.g., Child trafficking – write up a 100-150 word summary of child trafficking and 250-350 word summary of the journal article.

O'Connell Davidson, J. (2013). Telling tales: Child migration and child trafficking: Stories of trafficking obscure the realities for migrant children. *Child abuse and neglect*, 37(12), 1069-1079.