

## Background

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**Child Sexual Abuse in the family environment** is a form of abuse where the perpetrator may not be a blood relative, but could be someone who is considered "part of the family". Crown Prosecution Service Guidelines (2013) on the Sexual Offences Act 2003, state: "These offences reflect the modern family unit and take account of situations where someone is living within the same household as a child and assuming a position of trust or authority over that child, as well as relationships defined by blood ties, adoption, fostering, marriage or living together as partners".

## Why Does It Matter?

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The Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) estimated that 7.5% of adults aged 18 to 74 years experienced sexual abuse before the age of 16 years (3.1 million people); this includes both adult and child perpetrators.

A report by the Children's Commissioner in 2015 estimated, that child sexual abuse in the family environment comprises around two thirds of all child sexual abuse.

## Further Reading

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[Centre of Expertise on Child Sexual Abuse resources](#)

[ONS- Child sexual abuse in England & Wales Jan 2020](#)

[Victim and Survivor Voices from the Truth project](#)

[Unseen Evil: Sex abuse in families going under the radar press release](#)

[Multi-agency response to child sexual abuse in the family environment \(JTAs\)](#)

[CASPAR briefing Familial CSA](#)

[Making Noise: Children and young people's voices after sexual abuse](#)

[Share Some Secrets Resource](#)



## Information

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Research demonstrates that many victims do not recognise that they are being sexually abused and may not disclose the abuse until much later in life. This is particularly likely for younger children, where perpetrators normalise the experience of sexual abuse.

Girls and older children are more likely to experience sexual abuse.

The vast majority of children who experience sexual abuse were abused by someone they knew. A significant number of cases of sexual abuse in and around the family involve young people as the perpetrator - in itself, a possible indicator of experiences of sexual abuse.

## Questions to ask yourself & skills to develop

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- Am I prepared to think the unthinkable?
- How can we facilitate disclosure?
- Has the risk of sexual abuse in the family environment been considered where there are concerns about abuse and neglect?
- Has wider consideration in risk plans been given to brothers & sisters, other children who may have been affected or children who have displayed harmful sexual behaviour
- Do I understand the relationship between abusers and non-abusing parents or guardians
- Am I sufficiently child-centered?

**Everyone needs to play their part in identifying, preventing & tackling child sexual abuse in the family environment.**

## Barriers to Disclosure

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Children from some BME groups, & children with disabilities or learning difficulties may face additional barriers to disclosure.

Many victims are abused by several perpetrators, and in many cases, perpetrators will be known to each other. For many victims abuse leads to problems with mental and physical health, relationships and behaviour in general.

## Impact

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The disclosure or discovery of sexual abuse within a family is likely to have an enormous impact on the victim and their relationship with other family members, and this reaction may mitigate or exacerbate the impact on the victim. Legal processes risk re-traumatising victims, both pre-and post-trial. Issues include children not receiving court familiarisation visits, long delays in waiting for trial, low use of special measures to help children give best evidence, aggressive cross examination techniques.