

Child Sexual Abuse and Child Sexual Exploitation

NOTE: If you have specific concerns about the safety of a child or young person, follow the link: <https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/children-and-families/keeping-children-safe/report-concerns>

or call Norfolk County Council Children's Services on 0344 800 8020.

Introduction

A child is sexually abused when they are forced or persuaded to take part in sexual activities. This does not necessarily involve physical contact and it can happen online. Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) is a subset of Child Sexual Abuse (CSA), involving situations and relationships where young people receive 'something' (e.g. food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, affection, gifts, money) as a result of them performing sexual activities.¹

Summary

In 2019/20 there were 1,587 children and young people reported to Norfolk police as victims of CSA. When national research is applied to the Norfolk population, we can estimate that 6,700 of Norfolk's children aged 0-18 experienced sexual abuse in the last year. Sexual abuse has both immediate and lifelong consequences on the mental and physical wellbeing of the child. In 47% of cases of contact CSA in Norfolk, both the victim and perpetrator were under 18 - highlighting the need for youth engagement.

Headlines

National survey data suggests 0.6% of under 11s and 9.4% of 11–17 year olds have experienced sexual abuse in the past year (including contact and non-contact offences). If these percentages are applied to the current Norfolk population it would equate to around 700 children aged 0-11 and 6,000 aged 11 to 17. This means we can estimate 6,700 of the 180,000 children aged 0-18 in Norfolk have experienced sexual abuse in the last year.² Nationally the number of sexual offences recorded against children under 16 is increasing, but it is not known whether this relates to a genuine trend, or an increasing in reporting/recording.³

In 2019/20 there were 1,587 children and young people reported to Norfolk police as victims of CSA. Research suggests that only around one in eight children who are sexually abused are known to police and children's services.⁴ Survey data has reported the average duration of CSA is seven years and the average lapse of disclosure is nearly eight years.⁵

Consistently throughout the literature, across nearly every measure and across all age groups, females report higher rates of sexual abuse than males. In Norfolk, 78% of the victims in 2019/20 were female. Half were aged 0-12 (48%), just over a third were aged 13-15 (35%) and 14% were aged 16-17. However, other groups of victims may not be reporting abuse and therefore not truly represented.⁶

National research suggests that a third of victims (35%) had been exposed to domestic abuse within the home environment, either as a victim, witness, complainant, domestic party of child at risk. Just under 1 in 5 of these victims (18%) experienced repeat sexual abuse.⁷ It is more common that victims of CSA know their attacker than the offender be a stranger - parents/guardians neighbours or family friends were the most frequently

¹ NSPCC definitions

² Radford, L (2011) Child abuse and neglect in the UK today. National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to children (NSPCC) <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/globalassets/documents/research-reports/child-abuse-neglect-uk-today-research-report.pdf>
Research applied to the ONS mid-2015 population estimates for Norfolk.

³ NSPCC (2019) How safe are our children? The most comprehensive review of child protection in the UK 2019. <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/globalassets/documents/research-reports/how-safe-children-2016-report.pdf>

⁴ Children's Commissioner (2015) Protecting Children From Harm: Looting into child sexual abuse in the family network <https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/publication/protecting-children-from-harm/>

⁵ Allnock, D., & Miller, P. (2013). No one noticed no one heard: a study of disclosure of childhood abuse (NSPCC)

⁶ Data supplied by Norfolk Constabulary

⁷ Radford, L (2011) Child abuse and neglect in the UK today. National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to children (NSPCC) <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/globalassets/documents/research-reports/child-abuse-neglect-uk-today-research-report.pdf>

reported perpetrators of contact sexual abuse by adults. Research suggests that two thirds of sexual abuse occurs within the family.

See figure 1 below.

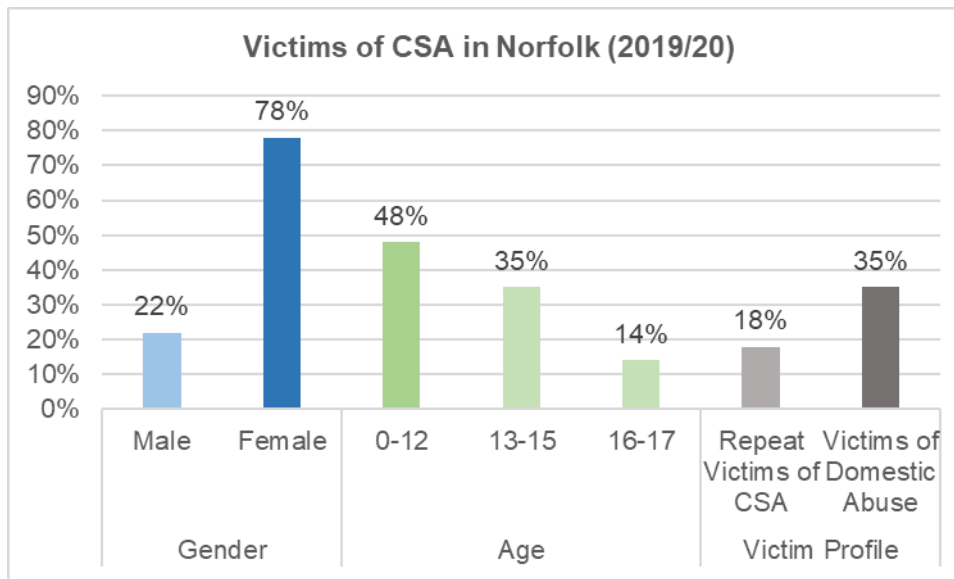


Figure 1: Profile of CSA victims in Norfolk 2019/20. Source: Norfolk Constabulary.

In 2019/20 Norfolk Constabulary identified 1,220 perpetrators for these CSA crimes, 88% were male. The majority (91%) were older than the victim - however 48% of perpetrators were under the age of 18. ⁸ Research suggests that two-thirds (68%) of male offenders had been sexually abused as children (contact and non-contact).⁹

Child Sexual Exploitation

There were 731 crimes in Norfolk in 2019/120 which were recorded as ‘Child Sexual Exploitation’ by police (a CSE indicator was added to the crime record). 37% of the offences were ‘Sexual Offences’ and a further 15% were ‘Miscellaneous Crimes Against Society’ offences (which includes ‘taking or making indecent images of children’ and ‘possession of indecent images of children’). A total of 374 offenders identified for these crimes. In addition, there were 674 Child Protection Investigations by Police (aka ‘child at risk’ reports or C39Ds). ¹⁰

Any child or young person can be a victim of sexual exploitation, but children are believed to be at greater risk of being sexually exploited if they: are homeless, have feelings of low self-esteem, have had a recent bereavement or loss, are in care, or are a young carer. A high proportion of grooming takes place online which then leads to sexual exploitation. A high number of CSE incidents involve drugs and alcohol, either as a way to inhibit the victim or to entice them to meet the perpetrator.¹¹

Of the 5,508 referrals to children's social care that has gone onto assessment in Norfolk in 2018/19 there were 218 (4%) where CSE was identified as a factor and 276 (5%) where CSA was a factor. In 2018/9 there were 912 children who became subject to a child protection plan, of these 42 (5%) had sexual abuse identified as the primary reason. These proportions are similar to national average¹²

⁸ Data supplied by Norfolk Constabulary

⁹ Elliot, M., Browne, K. and Kilcoyne, J. (1995). Child sexual abuse prevention: what offenders tell us. Child Abuse and Neglect, 19(5): 579- 594.

¹⁰ Data supplied by Norfolk Constabulary

¹¹ Children’s Commissioner (2017) Childhood vulnerability in England 2017

<https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/publication/childrens-commissioners-report-on-vulnerability/>

¹² Department for Education (2019) Characteristics of Children in Need 2018/19 Tables, Table C3: Episodes1 with assessment2 factor information in the year ending 31 March 2019, and factors identified at the end of assessment by local authority, Table D2: Child protection plans starting during the year ending 31 March 2019, by initial and latest category of abuse and local authority <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/characteristics-of-children-in-need-2018-to-2019>

Influences on Health and Wellbeing

Experiences of abuse and neglect may affect individuals differently. It has often been observed that the impact may be externalised, meaning that a young person “acts out” and the maltreatment affects their behaviour, as well as internalised, meaning that a young person may be depressed, withdrawn or isolated. Research suggests that all forms of abuse in childhood are generally associated with poorer mental health and elevated delinquent behaviour. Radford found that the 11–17 year olds surveyed who had been severely maltreated by a parent or guardian were over six times more likely to have current suicide ideation, and almost five times more likely to have self-harm thoughts than were the non-maltreated young people in this age group.¹³

Social, environmental, population context

While children from any background can experience abuse, and the majority of children living in poverty will never experience it - national studies do show that children who grow up in lower socioeconomic groups are more likely to experience all type of child abuse, including sexual abuse, than their more affluent peers.¹⁴ Analysis of Norfolk crime and referral data showed a correlation between areas of deprivation and CSE.

Current services, local plans and strategies

Every Local Authority has a Local Safeguarding Children Board to make sure that children are protected from harm and that their welfare is promoted. In Norfolk, the Norfolk Safeguarding Children Board (NSCB) is multi-agency partnership made up of statutory and voluntary partners who work with families and children. The NSCB has a strategy to ‘Prevent, Identify and Tackle Child Sexual Abuse’. The strategy has three main strands: Awareness raising, Training and development and Practice (access to services).¹⁵ The NSCB also undertake Serious Case Reviews (some of which relate to CSA), develop action plans and share learning amongst partner organisations.

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) is a form of Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) which has been subject to significant national attention due to high profile cases that revealed the extent of the issue and the impact it has on victims. Key safeguarding partners have frequently had their response criticised for not identifying or meeting the needs of children and young people affected. In response, there has been a significant investment by services to bridge gaps and improve service delivery. From a policing perspective, CSE/A has been designated a strategic priority placing it on the same footing as terrorism and organised crime across all forces in England and Wales.

The Norfolk Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) has a dedicated Multi-Agency Sexual Exploitation (MASE) team to review and risk assess all referrals and to help victims recognise this type of offending and secure support to escape this type of abuse. If a young person is identified to be at risk of CSE by the MASE team then a referral is sent to the Reaching Out on Sexual Exploitation (ROSE) Project, which is a voluntary organisation that is part of the Magdalen Group.

The Reaching Our on Sexual Exploitation (ROSE) team consisting of CSE Therapeutic and Outreach practitioners has provided a range of specialist services to young people who are affected by child sexual exploitation (CSE) in Norfolk since 2007. Norfolk Children’s Services commissions ROSE to provide a 1:1 Intensive Support for young people who are screened by Children Advice and Duty Service (CADS) as medium or high risk of exploitation. From the 1st April 2019 and 31st March 2020 this commission resulted in 85 young people engaged 288 intensive 1:1 support sessions through this provision.

In addition to these preventative and early intervention services include ROSE run drop-ins and group work to raise awareness about issues that affect and harm young people. This can include grooming online and offline, sexting, sexual exploitation, healthy/unhealthy relationships, sexual health and consent. Between 1st April 2019 and 31st March 2020 ROSE worked with 224 young people accessed ROSE services and engaged with 471 face-to-face sessions across the services offered by the project.

¹³ Radford, L (2011) Child abuse and neglect in the UK today. National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to children (NSPCC) <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/globalassets/documents/research-reports/child-abuse-neglect-uk-today-research-report.pdf>

¹⁴ As above

¹⁵ NSCB Strategy to Prevent, Identify and Tackle Child Sexual Abuse https://www.norfolkscb.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/CSA-Strategy-at-a-glance_A3_FINAL-092017.pdf

- 46% were aged 14-15 years old
- 70% were female
- 44% were looked after children
- 64% were active to Norfolk Children's Services

In the same period 14 young people aged 17-25 accessed The Magdalene Group's Transitional service receiving approximately 913 hours of intensive support.

The Magdalene Group also run the Jigsaw Education Programme which is delivered to children, young people and professionals in schools, care homes and youth groups throughout Norfolk. This education programme provides one off sessions as well as small group work short courses covering a range of topics including online and offline grooming, child sexual exploitation, internet safety, sexting, healthy relationships, rape, consent and how to keep yourself safe. They also deliver the Child Sexual Exploitation training to professionals as well as the Child Exploitation Online Protection (CEOP) 'Think u Know' course.

Norfolk Constabulary offer dedicated resources to children and young people through the Safer Schools Partnership. Safer Schools Partnership delivers the following inputs in all state secondary schools during the school year:

- Internet Safety (Child Exploitation and Online Protection) to Year 7
- Sexting to Year 8
- Healthy Relationships to Year 8, 10 and 11
- CSE to Year 9
- Halloween, Bonfire Night and Anti-Social Behaviour¹⁶

¹⁶ For more information see: <https://www.norfolk.police.uk/advice/child-protection/safer-schools-partnerships>

References and information

Norfolk Safeguarding Children Board Child Sexual Abuse Resources

<http://www.norfolkscb.org/people-working-with-children/child-sexual-abuse-resources/>

Radford, L (2011) Child abuse and neglect in the UK today. National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to children (NSPCC) <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/globalassets/documents/research-reports/child-abuse-neglect-uk-today-research-report.pdf>

The Magdalene Group ROSE Project

<http://magdalengroup.org/rose-project/>

Author and key contacts

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Online feedback:

Send us your query or feedback online using our online feedback form at

<http://www.norfolkinsight.org.uk/feedback>

Email: JSNA@norfolk.gov.uk

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