

Break The Silence are often asked for information around definition of sexual abuse, prevalence, why children don't tell and about the impact of abuse and therefore we have put together a brief summary to provide a general overview for our Partners. We hope this brief information will help you to understand the challenges and inequalities that Survivors experience. In addition, we do offer training on signs and symptoms of childhood sexual abuse and on how to respond to disclosure of abuse appropriately and sensitively. For more information visit our Partner Area/Training page.

Break The Silence ask all Partners to use their knowledge and their insight gained through training and access to resources to inform and influence, where appropriate, your operational approaches in order to promote equality for Survivors of rape and childhood sexual abuse.

Break the Silence has a selection of books and other resources covering a range of issues relating to rape and sexual abuse and covering aspects of the recovery process. The library has been collated over many years. We have made our resources available to Survivors, their Partners and Professionals working alongside Survivors. Please contact our office if you would like to access our resource library and materials.

Some current books that might be of interest ...

- The Courage to Heal, Authored by Laura Davis
- The Body Remembers, Authored by Babette Roschild
- The Body keeps the score, Authored by Bessel Van Der Kolk
- Trauma and Recovery, Authored by Judith Herman

If you would like to donate any books or resource materials to our library which may be useful for others, then we would be grateful for your donation. These can be accepted by any of our Staff, or direct to our offices in Kilmarnock.

Research available on-line:

- World Health Organisation's "World Report on Violence and Health" published in 2002
- Radford, L. et al (2011) Child abuse and neglect in the UK today
- Jones, L. et al (2012) Prevalence and risk of violence against children with disabilities: a systematic review and meta-analysis of observational studies).
- NSPCC (Child Maltreatment in the UK, NSPCC 2000)
- Action for Children: Deprivation and risk the case for early intervention
- NSPCC (2013) How safe are our children? 2013
- Bentley, H. et al (2016) How safe are our children?
- Dr Sandra Ferguson, NHS and CDC-Kaiser ACE Study – "Relationship of Childhood Abuse and Household Dysfunction to Many of the Leading Causes of Deaths in Adults), published in the American Journal for Preventive Medicine 1998, Volume 14, p245-258
- (McNamara and Brooker 2000, Yoshida et al 2009), and more recently in the UK (Thiara et al 2011)
- Domestic violence and women with learning disabilities, Dr Michelle McCarthy, Tizard Centre, University of Kent.

If you know of or have authored research that you feel would be useful to share, please contact us.

Definition of Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, including prostitution, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening.

The activities may involve physical contact including penetrative or non-penetrative acts such as kissing, touching or fondling the child's genitals or breasts, vaginal or anal intercourse or oral sex.

They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, pornographic material or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways. (Source: NSPCC 2006)

Prevalence

The World Health Organisation's "World Report on Violence and Health" published in 2002, estimates that 20% of females and 5-10% of males will have experienced childhood sexual abuse.

However, other statistics reported in the UK actually report a higher prevalence than those above ie. 21% of girls and 16% of boys will experience some form of childhood sexual abuse.

Why Don't Children Tell?

Three quarters of children who are abused do not tell anyone about it and many keep their secret all their lives.

In 2000 a study was conducted by the NSPCC (Source: Child Maltreatment in the UK, NSPCC 2000). Detailed below are some of the reasons why children said they were unable to tell:

"it was nobody else's business"

"didn't think it was serious or wrong"

"didn't want parents to find out"

"didn't want friends to find out"

"didn't want the authorities to find out"

"was frightened"

"didn't think would be believed"

"had been threatened by abuser"

Disabled children are over 3 times more likely to be abused than non-disabled children (Source: Jones, L. et al (2012) Prevalence and risk of violence against children with disabilities: a systematic review and meta-analysis of observational studies

What is the Impact of Childhood Sexual Abuse?

Adverse childhood experiences impact negatively on a child/young person's psychological and physical health, social growth and academic achievements. It affects their present and future, preventing them from achieving both their potential and their ambition in addition to placing them at extreme disadvantage.

Adverse childhood experiences have been linked to;

- risky health behaviour - smoking, alcoholism, drug use, early sexual activity, un-intended pregnancy;
- chronic health conditions - obesity, diabetes, depression, suicide attempts, STDs, heart disease, cancer, stroke, COPD, broken bones, self-harm;
- low-life potential academic achievements, graduation rates, lost time from work, unemployment; and
- early death.

As the number of adverse childhood experiences increases, so does the risk for these outcomes. (Dr Sandra Ferguson, NHS and CDC-Kaiser ACE Study – "Relationship of Childhood Abuse and Household Dysfunction to Many of the Leading Causes of Deaths in Adults), published in the American Journal for Preventive Medicine 1998, Volume 14, p245-258)

Extensive research documents the adverse short and long-term effects of rape and childhood sexual abuse, childhood sexual exploitation and childhood sexual violence. Symptoms or behaviours resulting often represent coping strategies employed in response to these abnormal, traumatic events. These are used for protection during abuse or later to guard against feelings of overwhelming helplessness and terror. However, some of these strategies may eventually lead to health problems and unfortunately, symptoms tend to be evaluated outside their original context and therefore survivors are often misdiagnosed or mislabelled, ending up in a cycle of sometimes inappropriate interventions.

Common physical symptoms in adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse include;

chronic pelvic pain, gastrointestinal distress/symptoms, IBS, musculoskeletal complaints, obesity, eating disorders, insomnia, sleeping disorders, pseudocyesis, sexual dysfunction, asthma, respiratory ailments, addictions, chronic headache, chronic back pain.

Psychological and behavioural symptoms include;

depression and anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms, dissociative states, repeated self-injury, suicide attempts, poor contraceptive practices, compulsive sexual behaviours, sexual dysfunction, somatizing disorders, eating disorders, poor adherence to medical recommendations, intolerance of or constant search for intimacy, expectation of early death.

In addition to the psychological distress that may increase the effect of survivor symptoms, there is evidence that abuse may result in biophysical changes, eg. after controlling for history of psychiatric disturbance, adult survivors had lowered thresholds for pain. It also has been suggested that chronic or traumatic stimulation heightens sensitivity, resulting in persistent pain such as abdominal and pelvic pain or other bowel symptoms.

Video Resources On-line

If you have seen some video content that you think would be useful for others, please contact us. We apologise if some of the links below have become obsolete. We endeavour to check and remove non-functioning video content. If you have accessed something which is no longer functioning, please contact us and we will remove it.

Child sexual exploitation (CSE) TV advert - Scottish Government

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EdTjumU6dHg>

Adam's Story: It Follows Me Around | Childline

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pLaHfZgSOYY>

The Invisible Child

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DupcFNoeV5s>

Don't Put Up With It! - Domestic Violence And Women With Learning Disabilities

<https://vimeo.com/116967832>

It's Ok Campaign, See Me Scotland

<https://www.seemescotland.org/young-people/its-okay-campaign/>

Internet Safety Campaign

<http://search.stv.tv/search/videos/3185578708001/>

'Domestic Abuse' Scottish Executive

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dScqol6Ug7s>

Not Ever, Rape Crisis Scotland

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h95-IL3C-Z8>

Domestic Abuse affects children too

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PuklRIQit_o

NHS: Female genital mutilation (FGM)

<http://www.nhs.uk/video/Pages/female-genital-mutilation.aspx?offset=1&searchterm=&searchtype=Video>

Anti-Human Trafficking Campaign

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EJQVBktEDSU>

Coercive Control, Living on Eggshells

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RikpW5n7d5k>