

# 7 Minute Briefing: Child Sexual Abuse

## Resources

A thorough list of procedures and support resources can be found on the WSP website:

<https://go.walsall.gov.uk/walsall-safeguarding-partnership/Professionals-Volunteers/Children-Safeguarding/Child-Sexual-Abuse>

There is a Sexual Behaviours Traffic Light Tool to help professionals identify, understand and respond appropriately to sexual behaviours in young people.

<https://www.brook.org.uk/training/wider-professional-training/sexual-behaviours-traffic-light-tool/>

The Partnership is reviewing their training offer for frontline staff on the issue of sexual abuse in the family environment. This will be available in due course.

## Procedures:

The Regional Child Protection Procedures for West Midlands is designed to assist professionals in identifying where children and young people's sexual relationships may be abusive.

It is used in conjunction with the Child Sexual Exploitation procedure.

Anyone concerned about a child's sexual behaviour should discuss this with their Designated Safeguarding Lead. When there are concerns that a young person is at risk of CSE, a referral must be made to children's social care.

## Speaking out about any form of abuse:

Young people may be confused about whether they have experienced abuse or not. This could be because they are unsure what constitutes 'normal' sexual activity, the abuse happened by a friend/partner, they blame themselves or the abuse took place online. Children may be reluctant to tell anybody about any type of sexual abuse. This may be because:

- They worry they won't be taken seriously
- They fear they will be blamed or bullied
- They are frightened of consequences of speaking out
- They are unsure if it is serious enough to report

This is why it is important for professionals to recognise the signs and types of sexual abuse.

## Definition

Child Sexual Abuse involves forcing or enticing a young person or child to take part in sexual activities. It includes contact and non-contact abuse.

The abusive sexual activity may involve trickery, coercion, threats and/or aggression.

Child Sexual Abuse can happen anywhere and may be online or in person.

It is difficult to know the prevalence of CSA but studies suggest 15-20% of girls and 7-8% of boys experience a form of sexual abuse (Centre of Expertise on CSA, 2018)

## Types of Child Sexual Abuse

### Contact:

- Sexual touching of any part of body with or without clothing
- Rape or penetration of an object in child's mouth, vagina or anus
- Forcing a child to take part in sexual activity
- Making a child take their clothes off, touch someone else or masturbate

### Non-contact:

- Encouraging a child to watch or hear sexual acts
- Not taking measures to prevent a child being exposed to sexual activity
- Meeting a child following sexual grooming with intent of abusing them
- Online abuse – making, viewing or distributing child abuse images
- Showing pornography to a child

## Signs of Child Sexual Abuse:

- Frightened when with someone they know
- Language or sexual behaviour you wouldn't expect them to know
- Nightmares or bed-wetting
- Sexually transmitted infections or pregnancy
- Becoming withdrawn, emotionally flat, disinterested and isolated
- Becoming hyperactive or aggressive
- School problems – poor attendance and/or poor school work, behaviour
  - Alcohol or drug use
  - Self-harm
  - Bleeding, discharge, pain around genital area



## Peer on peer abuse

Around 1/3 of child sexual abuse is committed by other children and young people (Hackett, 2014).

Peer sexual abuse can happen in a range of settings e.g. school, home, public places, parties, friend's houses and online.

## Intra-familial sexual abuse

Intra-familial child sexual abuse refers to CSA that occurs within a family environment.

The perpetrators may or may not be related to the child – the key factor is that they feel like family from the child's point of view.

CSA in the family is rarely an isolated occurrence and may occur for many years. Abuse can remain undisclosed as children may fear their abuser or not want to get them in trouble.

Intra-familial CSA occurs across all families however there are differences in the extent to which abuse gets reported and responded to. Higher levels of shame and stigma in Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic groups, combined with cultural assumptions by professionals can increase barriers to disclosures. Research indicates disabled children are three times more likely to be victims of CSA (Centre of Expertise on CSA, 2018).