

ADULT SURVIVORS OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

The extent of child sexual abuse

In more than three quarters of cases, the child knows and trusts the adult who commits the abuse. The vast majority of abusers are men but women are also capable of sexual abuse.

Child sexual abuse is any type of sexual assault on a child under 16. Sexual abuse takes many forms, including: explicit sexual talk; showing pornography; sexual touching; lack of privacy to bathe or undress; masturbation; and sexual intercourse.

Why do children stay silent?

- They may have been threatened with further abuse and violence if they tell
- They may be afraid that no one would believe them
- They may feel entirely to blame for the abuse
- They may not be able to describe or understand what has happened to them
- They may want to protect the family or even the abuser

You cannot be responsible for consenting to an act you didn't understand or which you were forced into or had no choice about.

The abuser is always to blame for the abuse

We recognise that some children are made or forced to abuse other children as part of their abuse. These children have no choice, e.g. "If you don't do this, you will be killed". These children are not to blame.

No matter how long ago you were abused, your feelings about what happened to you are important. You have the right to be listened to, no matter what you want to say. Through speaking about your abuse you may well be able to overcome any difficulties that you experience as an adult.

Effects of sexual abuse

- A loss of self-confidence, self-esteem and self-respect
- Feeling dirty, ashamed, suicidal, guilty, angry, sad, confused or to blame
- Being unable to trust people
- Experiencing flashbacks of what happened

Adult survivors may cope with past abuse by

- Self-harm / self-injury, e.g. cutting, scratching or burning
- Forgetting or minimising the abuse, e.g. through alcohol or drug use
- Breaking ties with, or confronting, the abuser
- Speaking about it and receiving support. Writing about the abuse.

Who can I speak to?

A lot of survivors feel the need to speak to someone about the effects child sexual abuse has had on their lives. Your feelings are as individual as you are - no two survivors will feel exactly the same. Talking to someone can help the healing process.

The Centre offers a helpline, support by telephone, letter or email, and face-to-face support, for survivors of rape, child sexual abuse and any other form of sexual abuse.

Face-to-face support can be arranged at a time suitable for you and your support worker/s. We provide support groups for survivors. This can help reduce the isolation so often felt by survivors and provides a safe setting to meet people who have had similar experiences.

The service we offer is run by women for women, and is free and confidential. We can sometimes reimburse reasonable costs for travelling and childcare. Signers and translators can be available on request.

HELPLINE SUPPORT

You can telephone our helpline for support or information on 01738 630965. We also have a 24 hour answering machine, so that at any other time messages can be left and will be returned discreetly, as soon as possible.

Write to: WRASAC P & K, P.O. Box 7570, Perth, PH2 1BY

Email info@perthshirerapecrisis.org

USEFUL CONTACTS

Samaritans	(01738) 626 666
Genito-Urinary Clinic	(01738) 473 220
Police Family Protection Unit	(01738) 892 911
Perthshire Women's Aid	(01738) 639 043
Victim Support	(01738) 567 171
Criminal Injuries Compensation Board	(0141) 331 2726
Citizens Advice Bureau	(01738) 624 301
Bristol Crisis Service for Women	(0117) 925 1119
Childline	(0800 1111)