



Believe in *me*

Tackling Child Sexual Abuse

See our new advert

barnardos.org.uk/campaigns/believe-in-me

**Believe in
children**
 **Barnardo's**

Introduction

Child sexual abuse (CSA) is a real threat to children across the UK. Evidence suggests one-in-six 11-17 year-olds have experienced sexual abuse (contact and/or non-contact) at some point in their lives, though experts agree this is likely to be an underestimate.¹

Child sexual exploitation is a form of sexual abuse, where a child is groomed or forced into sexual activity, often by adults not known to the family (unlike other forms of abuse that can happen in the home). Abuse and exploitation can also take place online – through any device that is connected to the internet, such as computers, laptops, tablets and smart phones. It can take place on any platform, including on social media, live streaming sites and on email.² Child sex offenders use the internet, often anonymously, to view and share images or videos (often called Child Sexual Abuse Material or ‘CSAM’), to groom children online, and to live-stream the sexual abuse of children.³

The impact of child sexual abuse on victims can be devastating, and can last a lifetime. It is associated with an increased risk of both mental and physical health problems and has implications for the families of victims and survivors, and for wider society.

However, poor outcomes for children who have been abused are not inevitable.

Evidence shows that with the right support, it is possible for victims and survivors to build resilience and go through a journey of recovery, so they can move past the abuse they experienced and thrive in adulthood. Receipt of effective support services and sensitive responses from family, friends, and professionals following disclosure have been identified as ‘protective factors’, which make a positive future more likely.

With the right support, recovery is possible.

Barnardo’s has been tackling child sexual abuse for more than 25 years, speaking out on what was once considered a ‘taboo’ issue. Today CSA is a priority in our ambitious 10 year Corporate Strategy, and we are investing our voluntary funds in raising awareness, generating new evidence and providing specialist services. We increasingly support children with complex, overlapping vulnerabilities – which may include criminal exploitation, such as so called ‘county lines’ drugs trafficking, or harmful sexual behaviour – where children who have experienced neglect, domestic abuse, physical, emotional or sexual abuse go on to sexually harm other children. Our specialist services support these children to come to terms with the trauma they have experienced, to change their harmful behaviours and to develop safe relationships.

At Barnardo’s our goal is to achieve better outcomes for more children, by helping to create stronger families, safer childhoods and positive futures. We are committed to eradicating child sexual abuse in all of its forms. This includes working with Government, local agencies, industry, charities, families and communities to improve prevention, identification, and support for children who have been sexually abused and those at risk. We also offer training and information for professionals working in the night time economy so they can better understand what to do if they suspect a child is being sexually abused or exploited.

1 Radford et al, NSPCC, 2011. 16.5% of 11-17 year-olds said they had experienced some kind of sexual abuse (including contact and non-contact) at some point in their lives

2 <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/what-is-child-abuse/types-of-abuse/online-abuse/>

3 <https://www.ceop.police.uk/Safety-Centre/what-is-online-child-sexual-abuse/>

The facts



One-in-six
11-17 year-olds
have experienced
sexual abuse at
some point in
their lives.⁴

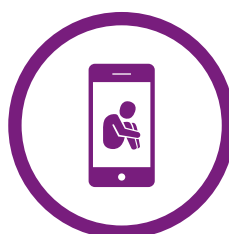


Data from our
services show that
two-in-three
children and
young people

we support who were groomed
online then met their perpetrator
and were sexually exploited.⁸



Children with
a disability are
three times
more likely
to be abused than
children without.⁵



Figures from the
Office of National
Statistics show
that in England
and Wales, between
October 2017 and

September 2018 police recorded
more than 9,000 child
sexual offences with
an online element.⁹



Statistics recorded
between April
2012 – March 2014
suggest that only
one-in-eight
sexual offences

against children come to the
attention of police or local
authority.⁶



In 2018 there were
over 18.4m
referrals of
child sexual abuse
material by US tech

companies to the National Centre
for Missing and Exploited Children
(NCMEC). Of those, there were
113, 948 UK-related referrals in
2018, up from 82,109 in 2017.¹⁰



Over a third
of all police-
recorded sexual
offences are
against children.⁷

⁴ Radford et al, NSPCC, 2011. [16.5% of 11-17 year-olds said they had experienced some kind of sexual abuse \(including contact and non-contact\) at some point in their lives](#)

⁵ <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/globalassets/documents/research-reports/right-safe-disabled-children-abuse-report.pdf>

⁶ <https://www.iicsa.org.uk/publications/inquiry/interim/nature-effects-child-sexual-abuse/scale-child-sexual-abuse-england-wales>

⁷ <https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/research-resources/statistics-briefings/child-sexual-abuse/>

⁸ <https://www.barnardos.org.uk/what-we-do/policy-research-unit/research-and-publications/barnardos-online-grooming-survey-2016/publication-view.jsp?pid=PUB-2920>

⁹ <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/what-we-do/news-opinion/web-exploited-by-child-sex-offenders/>

¹⁰ <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/online-harms-white-paper/online-harms-white-paper>

What needs to change?

Joined up government action

Government departments must work together in order to prevent abuse and bring perpetrators to justice. It is crucial that there is more investment in specialist services to make sure all victims receive high quality, timely support.

Find the hidden victims

Too many children are falling through the gaps in the system. Children who are victims of sexual abuse are less likely to be identified if they are under ten, LGBTQ, disabled, boys, or BAME.

No more victim blaming

Government, local agencies, corporations and communities must take responsibility for protecting and safeguarding children. Although education is vital, children must not be expected to keep themselves safe.

Focus on prevention

Government, local agencies, charities and communities should work together to prevent abuse and raise awareness of the signs a child is being abused, which are too often dismissed as 'behavioural issues'. As part of this, schools must be given the necessary resources to deliver high quality Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) lessons, so they can help children learn about healthy relationships, consent, respect and online safety.

Preventative measures to tackle CSA online

The Online Harms White Paper¹¹ paper highlights that companies should take reasonable steps to 'proactively identify accounts showing indicators of CSA activity and ensure children are protected from them'. However, there is not enough emphasis on preventative measures. Companies should be under a duty to embed 'safety by design' to prevent harm from taking place.

Our Work

Barnardo's is the UK's largest national children's charity. Today we support around **300,000 children, young people, parents and carers** through more than **1,000 services**.

Barnardo's has been supporting children and young people affected by sexual abuse for over 25 years and now delivers specialist services in **45 locations** across the UK. Our practitioners support children and young people's recovery by rebuilding their confidence and self-esteem, and by helping their families, schools and social networks make sense of what has happened. It is often long-term and complex work. We also work in partnership with other statutory and voluntary organisations to promote joined-up responses for children and their families, and strong support networks.

In 2018/19 Barnardo's supported **7,300 children, young people, parents and carers** through our child abuse and exploitation services across the UK – including **3,500 in our child sexual exploitation services, 2,000 in our missing services, 800 in our FGM services, 600 in our trafficking services and 400 in our harmful sexual behaviour services**. We also host the **Centre of Expertise on Child Sexual Abuse on behalf of the Home Office**.

¹¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/online-harms-white-paper/online-harms-white-paper>

Jamie's story¹²

Jamie was aged 13 when Barnardo's started to support him, and he had already been through a lot. He and his younger brother had lived with foster carers for a year after their Dad had not been able to look after them, and both the boys had just moved again to live with their older cousin. Around this time, Jamie was not attending school, and had started to go missing, sometimes overnight. Although people were worried and concerned for him, Jamie could not tell anyone what had happened whilst he was missing or where he had gone.

Jamie's carers and social worker became more concerned when they discovered he was smoking cannabis, almost daily. No one could identify who was giving drugs to him and Jamie was becoming more and more mistrusting of adults and also more withdrawn from those around him. The police became involved when Jamie was involved in some vandalism in the street, and rows between him and his carers were becoming more frequent.

When Barnardo's started to work with Jamie, his project worker began by trying to find out more about his situation, and sometimes Jamie simply didn't want to speak. His worker always reassured him that this was fine and continued to be patient in building up a relationship with Jamie, and made sure not to pressure him.

As well as talking directly to Jamie, Jamie's project worker also started to talk to other young people and to other organisations in the local area in order to gain a greater understanding of the local safeguarding challenges they faced. Jamie's worker started to build up an idea of the places where young people like to go, which places felt safe and which didn't. There was frequent mention of a house nearby where



young people would be invited to hang out, but people often said it was 'dodgy'.

Working with other agencies, this information helped identify that the house was owned by a registered sex offender. Working with social care and the police, a number of young people, including Jamie, were identified as having been groomed and coerced to visit the property where it was suspected the young people were being given drugs and alcohol and potentially being sexually abused.

It is still hard for Jamie to talk about what happened, and his worker still sees him regularly. He's starting to appear happier, more animated and beginning to open up a little about what has happened to him, but his worker still never puts pressure on him to talk about the abuse. They are working on a plan to help Jamie back into school and are also working with the Head Teacher on a plan that will allow all the young people that may have been affected to be supported together.

¹² This is a composite case study bringing together a number of children's experiences.

View our advert and share it online to help
us raise awareness of child sexual abuse
barnardos.org.uk/campaigns/believe-in-me

barnardos.org.uk

Barnardo House, Tanners Lane, Barkingside, Ilford, Essex IG6 1QG | Tel: 0208 550 8822

Barnardo's Registered Charity Nos.216250 and SC037605 21599dos20