

# What we all need to know

Keeping ethnic  
minority children  
safe from sexual  
abuse



# What we need to know to protect our children

Most victims of child sexual abuse do not talk about it and can't ask for help. So adults have to. We can prevent child sexual abuse from happening in the first place by understanding the risks, putting in place family safety plans, and knowing what to do if we have a concern.

This leaflet aims to provide the information we all need to prevent child sexual abuse, to recognise the warning signs and to build the confidence to do something about it.

It's always better to talk through a worry or gut feeling rather than ignore it and hope everything is ok.

If you'd like to talk through any concerns or get more information, you can speak to the experienced advisors on our confidential Stop It Now! helpline.

Callers do not need to give identifying information, so can remain anonymous. We speak to thousands of people every year, and help them take action to protect children and young people from sexual abuse and exploitation.



**Call 0808 1000 900  
for anonymous  
support or visit  
[stopitnow.org.uk/helpline](https://stopitnow.org.uk/helpline)  
to get in touch online**



## What is child sexual abuse?

**People don't always realise that there are different forms of child sexual abuse.**

It isn't just about an adult having sex with a child or touching a child in a sexual way, although it often does involve touching a child's private parts or making them touch someone else's.

It can also include other activities, such as showing a child pornography or forcing a child to watch a sexual act.

Child sexual abuse also happens online, for example making and sharing sexual images of under 18s (sometimes called child pornography), and having sexual conversations with under 16s, commonly called grooming.

While most of this abuse is committed by adults, as much as one third is committed by people under 18.

When it comes to children and young people, there's a real difference between normal sexual exploration and abusive behaviour. As parents or carers, we need to know what this difference is, and where we can go for advice if we have concerns or questions.

## What's the risk?

Child sexual abuse is a huge problem, but often it is hidden. It affects children from all backgrounds.

- Around 1 in 6 children will be sexually abused. Many won't tell anyone, and most won't be known to police, social services or health workers.
- Most sexual abuse is carried out by someone the child knows. Around one third of sexual abuse is carried out by other children and young people.
- Children with a disability are more likely to be sexually abused than children who don't have a disability.

Shame can mean abuse isn't talked about or reported, especially in ethnic minority communities.

## Who sexually abuses children?

People who sexually abuse children come from all backgrounds, ethnicities, communities and walks of life.

They can be anyone – men, women, married, single, young people, children, family members, friends or professionals.

Most children who are sexually abused are abused by someone they know and trust. They are:

- people we know
- people we care about
- people from all classes, cultures and backgrounds.

**"He looks so ordinary and is great with kids. I'd have never recognised him as an abuser."**

Mother of 7-year-old boy abused by a neighbour

## How abuse happens

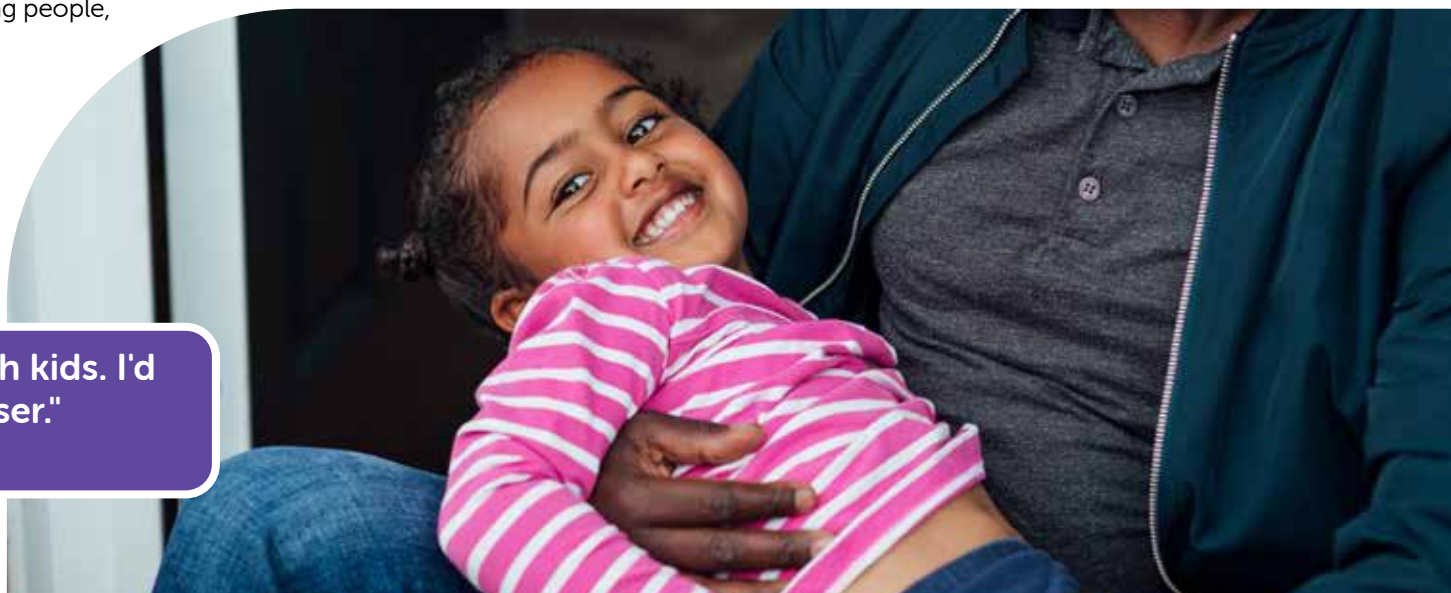
It is not easy to understand how ordinary people can harm children. Some people who sexually abuse children know that it is wrong and are unhappy about what they are doing. Others think their behaviour is OK and that what they do shows their love for children.

### Getting close to children and adults - grooming

Many abusers are good at making friends with children and the adults around them. Some make friends with parents who are having difficulties, sometimes on their own. Others will present themselves as trustworthy and offer to babysit or other support with childcare. Some find trusted positions in the community which put them in contact with children.

### Secrets

People who sexually abuse children might offer a combination of gifts or treats and threats about what will happen if the child says 'no' or tells someone. To keep the abuse secret, the abuser will often play on the child's fear, embarrassment or guilt about what is happening. They might convince the child that no one will believe them if they told.



## Why don't children tell?

**Many children who have been sexually abused don't tell anyone about the abuse at the time it happens because of embarrassment or humiliation, or thinking that they wouldn't be believed.**

Sometimes a child is so young or afraid that they don't know or can't find the words to explain what is happening to them. And sometimes they are so confused by the person that has abused them, that they might not know that what is happening is wrong.

It is important for children to have trusted adults in their lives who they can talk to about any concerns. Children may feel like they will not be believed if the perpetrator is someone very respected or highly regarded in the community. But it is important to take all concerns seriously and report them no matter who it involves.



### Things that can make talking about child sexual abuse harder if you're from an ethnic minority community

**Stigma** – child sexual abuse is a very sensitive topic and within some ethnic minority communities there can be avoidance or denial. Some people think that it may bring shame to the family, cause relationship breakdowns and affect a child's future prospects if they disclose concerns. But it is our duty to report any concerns as children have a right by law to be protected from harm. This is the most important thing.

**Language barrier** – children and parents might have different first languages and one or both might not speak English fluently. It is still important to talk about preventing harm and any worries, maybe through play or pictures.

**Knowing your rights** - some parents might not understand child protection laws here and they may be different to the ones from their country of origin. The confidential Stop It Now! helpline can support you to understand your rights.

**Fear** - you might be afraid of what will happen to your child if you tell someone about your worries. There are ways to report concerns anonymously and confidentially, and our helpline can support you to act in the best interests of the child. You should always ask for help and remember that you are not alone.

**There are many organisations that can support you and some are listed at the end of this booklet.**

## What increases the risk to a child or family?

**Any child can be sexually abused. People who abuse children come from all backgrounds and walks of life. The stereotypes don't match reality.**

But children and young people can be especially vulnerable if they are lonely, or feel isolated. They might have fallen out with their friends, or not like the way they look. Their behaviour could become challenging or they might seek extra attention. They might start taking greater risks than they normally would. When they are like this, they might be more challenging for us as parents, and it can be quite easy to switch off as they are hard work! But in fact, this is when they need us most as parents.

### Some factors that can make a child more vulnerable:

- **Lack of parental supervision, heavy reliance on babysitters**
- **Poor or negative communication**
- **Lack of accurate sexual education**
- **Lots of visitors to the home**
- **Lack of understanding of appropriate relationships between adults and children**
- **Experiences of witnessing violent, aggressive relationships**
- **Isolated, lonely, emotionally deprived children**
- **Substance or alcohol misuse in the home.**



## Signs to watch out for in children and young people

Children often show us, rather than tell us, that something is upsetting them. There might be many reasons for changes in their behaviour, but if we notice a combination of worrying signs, it is time to seek help or advice.

### What to watch out for in children

- Unexpected change in behaviour or personality
- Regressing to younger behaviours
- Acting out in sexual ways with toys or objects
- Unaccountable fears of people or places
- Showing a sexual awareness beyond their age
- Unexplained money or gifts
- Being anxious or depressed
- Self-harm
- Using drugs or alcohol

It's always better to talk through a worry or gut feeling rather than ignore it and hope everything is ok.

If you'd like to talk through any concerns or get more information, you can speak to the experienced advisors on our confidential Stop It Now! helpline.

Call 0808 1000 900 for anonymous support or visit [stopitnow.org.uk/helpline](https://stopitnow.org.uk/helpline) to get in touch online.

You can find out more about the signs of child sexual abuse by searching online for 'Parents Protect'.



## Signs in adults that they might be a risk

Most children who are sexually abused are abused by someone they know and trust. As hard as it is to think about, that means that sometimes family and friends might be a risk to children. So we still need to think about safety when children are with people they should be able to trust, such as at family gatherings or parties.

The signs that an adult might be using their relationship with a child for sexual reasons might not be obvious. We might feel uncomfortable about the way they play with the child, or seem always to be favouring them and creating reasons for them to be alone.

### There might be cause for concern about the behaviour of an adult or young person if they:

- Don't allow a child enough privacy
- Insist on kissing, hugging, wrestling or tickling even when the child does not want it
- Are interested in the sexual development of a child or teenager
- Discuss or share sexual jokes or sexual material with a child or young person, online or offline
- Insist on time alone with a child, with no interruptions
- Spend most of their spare time with children and have little interest in spending time with people their own age
- Regularly offer to babysit children for free or take children on overnight outings alone
- Buy children expensive gifts or give them money for no reason
- Treat a particular child as a favourite, making them feel 'special' compared with others in the family
- Pick on a particular child.

# Online safety

**Children regularly use different websites and apps from their parents, and it can be hard to keep up in this ever-changing digital world.**

But the things that help keep children safe online are often similar to the things that keep them safe offline.

Show them how to report any worrying behaviour they see online – for example through Child Exploitation and Online Protection Command or the Internet Watch Foundation. [Visit \*\*ceop.police.uk/ceop-reporting\*\*](https://www.ceop.police.uk/ceop-reporting)

We are helping prepare our children for their futures if we help them go online safely and responsibly. Many people worry about amounts of screen time, but there can be lots of positives about what your child is doing online – entertainment, keeping in touch with friends and researching homework – so quality screen time is what's important.

## Here are some tips to help you keep young people safe online:


- Discuss expectations before joining a social networking site
- Agree that a trusted adult is added as a 'friend' and ensure they have a private profile
- Talk to them about the dangers of sharing personal data
- Talk about what they think is normal online and what behaviour to expect from other and themselves
- Encourage them to think critically and question what they see online
- Ensure they understand not everybody is who they say they are when they only meet online
- Show them how to report any worrying behaviour they see or experience online
- Remind them that the same rules apply online at home and at school
- Check your child knows how to report abuse or block contacts
- Start a conversation about online pornography and the dangers of it

- Check the age ratings of games, online films and programmes
- Remind them that they can talk to you if they see or anything happens that upsets or worries them.

## You can choose some age-appropriate questions to start a conversation:

- Which apps/games are you using?
- What websites do you enjoy using and why?
- How does this game/app work? Can I play?
- Do you have any online friends? Who are they?
- Where would you go for help?
- Do you know how to block and report?
- Do you know what your personal information is?
- Do you know your limits?
- Have you heard at school about 'nudes' being sent around?
- What would you do if someone asked you?
- Have you ever spoken to strangers online?
- What kind of things would make you feel uncomfortable online – strangers, picture requests, contacts from family members, being tagged in pictures, friend/follow requests?
- Do you know what your rights and responsibilities online are?





## What to do if a child tells you about abuse

- 1 Respond with care and urgency**  
If you think a child is trying to tell you about something that has happened, you should react quickly and with care.
- 2 Believe the child**  
If a child trusts you enough to tell you about abuse, you must remember that they rarely lie about such things.
- 3 Be supportive**  
It is important that they feel supported - don't dismiss their claims or put them off talking about it.
- 4 Stay calm**  
If they are talking to you about it, don't get angry or upset. Stay calm. If you get angry the child might think you are going to punish them. This will play into the hands of the person who sexually abused the child, who might have warned the child not to tell.
- 5 Be caring**  
Make sure the child knows you love them and that they haven't done anything wrong and keep reassuring them of this.
- 6 Face the problem**  
When the abuse is known, adults must face the problem and protect the child from any further contact with the person who committed the abuse.
- 7 Re-establish safety**  
To keep your child safe you can put into place a family safety plan.
- 8 Get help**  
Get help from professionals who can help guide you towards safety and healing. Information on where to get help can be found on our Parents Protect website.
- 9 Do not despair**  
Children can and do recover from child sexual abuse. It is very difficult to hear that someone you love has been hurt in such a way but help to recover is available.
- 10 Call 0808 1000 900 for anonymous support or visit [stopitnow.org.uk/helpline](https://stopitnow.org.uk/helpline) to get in touch online.**

## What can I do if I have concerns or worries?

**If you know about abuse and don't tell anyone, the person who offended might well continue to abuse, the child will continue to suffer, and more children might become victims. But you can change that.**

If you see warning signs and don't know what to do, get advice and help. It's always better to talk through a worry or gut feeling rather than ignore it and hope everything is ok.

You can speak to the experienced advisors on our confidential Stop It Now! helpline.

Callers do not need to give identifying information, so can remain anonymous. We speak to thousands of people every year, and help them take action to protect children and young people from sexual abuse and exploitation.

- Call 0808 1000 900 for anonymous support or visit [stopitnow.org.uk/helpline](https://stopitnow.org.uk/helpline) to get in touch online.
- If your child is in immediate danger call the police on 999.
- You can find more information about what happens after you make a disclosure of abuse on the Stop It Now! Wales website.
- You can also find contact details for your local Children's Services by searching online.





# How you can keep your children safe

Using some of these ideas to keep your child safe can help develop a protective family environment that can prevent and respond to concerns about child sexual abuse. This can help develop skills in children to become resilient and to bounce back from difficult things in their lives.

1

## Know the signs of child sexual abuse

Warning signs is just another way of saying 'opportunity to protect'. Doing something when you spot the signs can prevent harm happening in the first place.

2

## Open communication

Let your child know that they can come to you if they're worried about anything and that you'll listen, believe and help them. But it is not a one-time only event – let everyone know it is ok to ask questions.

3

## Ask questions

Take an interest in what your children are doing, where they're going and who they're with. This is as important online as it is in the real world.

4

## Set boundaries

If your child doesn't want to hug or kiss someone, then this should be respected. Let children set their own boundaries and only consent to what they feel comfortable to do. They have the right to say no.

5

## Educate everyone in the family

Understanding the issues and passing information on will help protect children from harm.

6

## Get help and advice

You can speak to the experienced advisors on our confidential Stop It Now! helpline. They'll give you support, advice and information and if you'd like to you can stay anonymous. We speak to thousands of people every year, and help them take action to protect children and young people from sexual abuse and exploitation.

# Ideas to start a conversation with your child

**Thinking about talking to your child about safety can feel scary, but it doesn't need be. Start with simple, age-appropriate conversations.**

Using some of these positive preventative actions and ideas to keep your child safe can help grow a protective family environment that can prevent and respond to concerns about child sexual abuse. This can help develop skills in children to become strong and to bounce back from difficult things in their lives.

- **Talk to them about how their body belongs to them and that they can say no if someone tries to touch them**
- **Chose the right time for a conversation: bath-time, walking home from school or in the car are all opportunities to have that first talk**
- **Avoid using scary words: introduce the subject by saying "can I talk to you about this - because it's important to me"**
- **Explain to them the difference between a "good secret" - like a surprise party - and a "bad secret" - one that you can never tell anyone.**

Understand that teenagers might be going through different changes, so talking to their parents may be the last thing they want to do. But it is important to keep the lines of communication open.

Ensure that your children know that they can talk to you about any worry they might have.

Children need to know that they are going to be listened to without judgement.

Young people might need signposting to reliable and trusted sources of information about relationships, sex and sexuality.

Talk about peer pressure and their rights to be in charge of their own bodies.

## Don't be afraid to ask questions - and follow your gut instinct

- **Who else has responsibility for your child?  
Sleepovers, family members, paid carers?**
- **Are you aware of what your child learns in education?  
Personal safety, healthy relationships, self-protection, sex education?**
- **Have you discussed family boundaries?  
Privacy, supervision, family visitors, children's friends?**

# Where to get help and advice

## The Stop It Now! helpline

It's always better to talk through a worry or gut feeling rather than ignore it and hope everything is ok. If you'd like to talk through any concerns or get more information, you can speak to the experienced advisors on our confidential Stop It Now! helpline.

Callers do not need to give identifying information, so can remain anonymous. We speak to thousands of people every year, and help them take action to protect children and young people from sexual abuse and exploitation.

**Call 0808 1000 900 for anonymous support or visit [stopitnow.org.uk/helpline](http://stopitnow.org.uk/helpline) to get in touch online.**

*You can find more information about what happens after you report abuse on the [Stop It Now! Wales](http://stopitnow.org.uk) website.*

## Parents Protect

Our website has advice and information for parents, carers and professionals who want to know more about how they can prevent child sexual abuse.

It has more information on the areas included in this leaflet and short films to help you understand the risks and how to protect children offline and online. These are in English and Welsh. It also has a guide to help you make a family safety plan and SMART

rules that you can pass on to your children to help them keep safe. And there are books that can help you start really important conversations with your children.

[parentsprotect.co.uk](http://parentsprotect.co.uk)

## NSPCC Underwear Rule: 'Pantosaurus'

With the help of a friendly dinosaur, these resources help parents talk to their children about body safety – search online for 'Pantosaurus' to find the information in different languages.

## There are many organisations that help ethnic minority families in Wales.

### EYST Wales

EYST Wales was set up to support ethnic minority young people, their families and communities in Wales. The organisation aims to provide culturally sensitive support services to its target group.

[eyst.org.uk](http://eyst.org.uk)  
**01792 466 980**  
[info@eyst.org.uk](mailto:info@eyst.org.uk)

### Barnardo's

Barnardo's Cymru aims to reach out to the most disadvantaged children, young people, families and communities in Wales to help ensure that they have the best

possible start in life and overcome the disadvantages caused by poverty, abuse and discrimination.

[barnardos.org.uk/wales](http://barnardos.org.uk/wales)  
**02920 493 387**  
[cymru@barnardos.org.uk](mailto:cymru@barnardos.org.uk)

### BAWSO

BAWSO works across Wales with those affected by or at risk of domestic abuse and all forms of violence.

[bawso.org.uk](http://bawso.org.uk)  
**029 20644 633**  
[info@bawso.org.uk](mailto:info@bawso.org.uk)

### Live Fear Free helpline

This helpline is funded by the Welsh Government and can provide help and advice to anyone experiencing sexual violence or if you know someone that needs help. All conversations with Live Fear Free are confidential and are taken by staff that are highly experienced and fully trained.

[gov.wales/live-fear-free](http://gov.wales/live-fear-free)  
**Call 0808 80 10 800 or text 07860 077 333**  
[info@livefearfreehelpline.wales](mailto:info@livefearfreehelpline.wales)

(These are all available 24 hours a day 7 days a week)

### Welsh Refugee Council

The Welsh Refugee Council improve the lives of refugees and asylum seekers in Wales through delivering specialist support and influencing policy and practice. They deliver practical support, advice and advocacy and information through

many different initiatives.

[wrc.wales](http://wrc.wales)  
**0300 3033 953**  
[info@wales.wrc](mailto:info@wales.wrc)

### Women Connect First

Women Connect First works to empower black and minority ethnic women in Cardiff and south-east Wales by offering services and training. They particularly support disadvantaged, isolated and marginalised women to help them realise their full potential and make a positive contribution to Welsh society.

[womenconnectfirst.org.uk](http://womenconnectfirst.org.uk)  
**02920 343 154**  
[admin@womenconnectfirst.org.uk](mailto:admin@womenconnectfirst.org.uk)

### Thinkuknow

Thinkuknow is an educational programme from NCA-CEOP, a UK organisation which protects children both online and offline. Their website has useful resources for parents and young people about internet safety.

[thinkuknow.co.uk](http://thinkuknow.co.uk)

### CEOP

If you are worried about online sexual abuse or the way someone has been communicating with you or your child online, make a report to one of CEOP's child protection advisors. You will find help and support by reporting inappropriate contact online.

[ceop.police.uk/safety-centre](http://ceop.police.uk/safety-centre)

## Glossary

**Abuser** – A person who has committed a harmful or illegal act such as CSA.

**Child** – A person who is under the age of 18.

**Child sexual abuse** – This involves forcing or persuading a child under the age of 18 to take part in sexual activities. CSA can happen online or in person.

**Culture** – Customs, beliefs and the way of life for different groups of people.

**Ethnicity** - Refers to parts of a culture including language, religion, foods and way of life.

**Ethnic minority community** - This phrase is used in this report to refer to people who identify with an ethnic minority group, and is used by the Office for National Statistics to describe ethnicities such as 'black', 'black Caribbean', 'Asian', 'Indian' (ONS 2019 and Welsh Government).

**Grooming** - When someone builds a relationship with a child or young person so they can harm them. Children and young people who are groomed can be sexually abused, exploited or trafficked. Anyone can groom a **child**, no matter age, gender or race.

**Positive preventative action** – The steps we can take prevent child sexual abuse from happening.

**Stereotypical** – A widely held and simplified view about a particular issue or group of people.

**Stigma** – A mark of disgrace associated with a person based on culture, race, age, religion, experiences or circumstances.

**Taboo** – A subject, word or action which is avoided for social or religious reasons.

**Victim** – A person who has been harmed, injured or killed in an illegal act.

## Stop It Now! Wales is working with Ethnic Minorities and Youth Support Team (EYST) to help prevent child sexual abuse in ethnic minority communities

Stop It Now! Wales is part of The Lucy Faithfull Foundation - a child protection charity dedicated to preventing child sexual abuse.

We work with families and professionals so that everyone knows how they can play their part to keep children safe. Our confidential Stop It Now! helpline gives anonymous advice to anyone with worries about child sexual abuse and how to prevent it.

EYST works with ethnic minority young people, families and individuals including refugees and asylum-seekers living in Wales. It provides services including education, employment, health, family support and community safety. It also aims to challenge and counter negative stereotypes about ethnic diversity and to increase awareness and understanding.

This partnership is funded by the Welsh Government.



# It's always better to talk through a worry or gut feeling rather than ignore it and hope everything is ok.

If you'd like to talk through any concerns or get more information, you can speak to the experienced advisors on our confidential Stop It Now! helpline.

**Call 0808 1000 900 for anonymous support or visit [stopitnow.org.uk/helpline](https://stopitnow.org.uk/helpline) to get in touch online.**

All children and young people have the right to live their life safe and free from harm.

**Find out more about children's rights in Wales:  
[gov.wales/childrens-rights-in-wales](https://gov.wales/childrens-rights-in-wales)**

You can also find general advice and information in English and Welsh on our websites:

**[stopitnow.org.uk/wales](https://stopitnow.org.uk/wales)  
[parentsprotect.co.uk](https://parentsprotect.co.uk)**



The Lucy Faithfull Foundation is a registered Charity No. 1013025, and is a company limited by guarantee. Registered in England No. 2729957. Registered office: 2 Birch House, Harris Business Park, Hanbury Road, Stoke Prior, Bromsgrove, B60 4DJ.

Important note: The photographic content within this document is for illustrative purposes only. All persons featured are models @ iStock and Shutterstock.