

NSPCC

Together for Childhood

CREATING A PARTNERSHIP TO PREVENT
CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE AND SUPPORT CHILDREN
AND THEIR FAMILIES



EVERY CHILDHOOD IS WORTH FIGHTING FOR



Prevention and early intervention make a lot of sense, but turning them into a reality can be a challenge for local areas. We want to work with partners in local areas to make a real difference to children.

Together with the community and local partners we want to turn prevention into a reality.

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Whilst awareness of child abuse has never been higher, the biggest question of all must become how we together prevent that abuse and neglect from taking place in the first place. That is the primary focus for the NSPCC as we embark on our new five-year strategy.

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Peter Wanless, Chief Executive, NSPCC

Demonstrating that child sexual abuse is preventable

The significant long-term harm and costs of child sexual abuse are well documented. Victims and survivors can suffer life-long psychological harm with serious consequences for their health and wellbeing and also for society as a whole. NSPCC research (2012) estimated that the cost of child sexual abuse to the wider society in the UK in 2012 alone was between £1.6 and £3.2 billion. But there is growing evidence that with the right interventions abuse can be prevented. Our Together for Childhood project aims to make our communities safer for every child by bringing people together to test effective approaches to prevention. Our aim is to draw on examples of best practice from around the world and pilot new approaches – to deliver what works.

The NSPCC will make a 5-10 year investment of resources in a small number of selected areas. We will work with partners to co-design, deliver and evaluate effective and innovative approaches to prevention.

Our ambition is to:

- build local partnerships that can drive preventative activities and services that are both innovative and based on the best available evidence
- create sustainable change at a systems level
- increase public and professional confidence in recognising and tackling child sexual abuse.

What is child sexual abuse?

Child sexual abuse is sexual behaviour towards children. It involves an element of coercion or a power imbalance. Child sexual abuse includes ‘contact abuse’ and ‘non-contact abuse’. ‘Contact abuse’ can range from inappropriate sexual touching to rape. ‘Non-contact abuse’ includes things like making a child watch pornography or grooming them online to perform sexual acts on-screen. Viewing sexual pictures of a child is also sexual abuse – the child becomes a victim the moment the photo is taken and again each time it is viewed.

Child sexual exploitation is a type of sexual abuse in which children are sexually exploited for money, power or status.

Harmful sexual behaviour is sexual behaviours expressed by children and young people under the age of 18 years old that are developmentally inappropriate, may be harmful towards self or others and/or be abusive towards another child, young person or adult.

Harmful sexual behaviour and child sexual exploitation can be viewed as distinct but overlapping forms of sexual abuse. Both share the elements of coercion, misuse of power, violence and lack of consent and choice.



What is Together for Childhood?

Together for Childhood is a **place-based approach** to prevention, seeking to understand and address problems at a local level in a truly integrated way, with a focus on community capacity-building and evidence-based development, to radically improve the way we prevent child sexual abuse. By **working together**, we can combine NSPCC and local resources and expertise to help realise a shared vision of keeping children safe.

By **acting together**, we can keep children safe. If each person plays their part, we can make it less likely that sexual abuse happens.

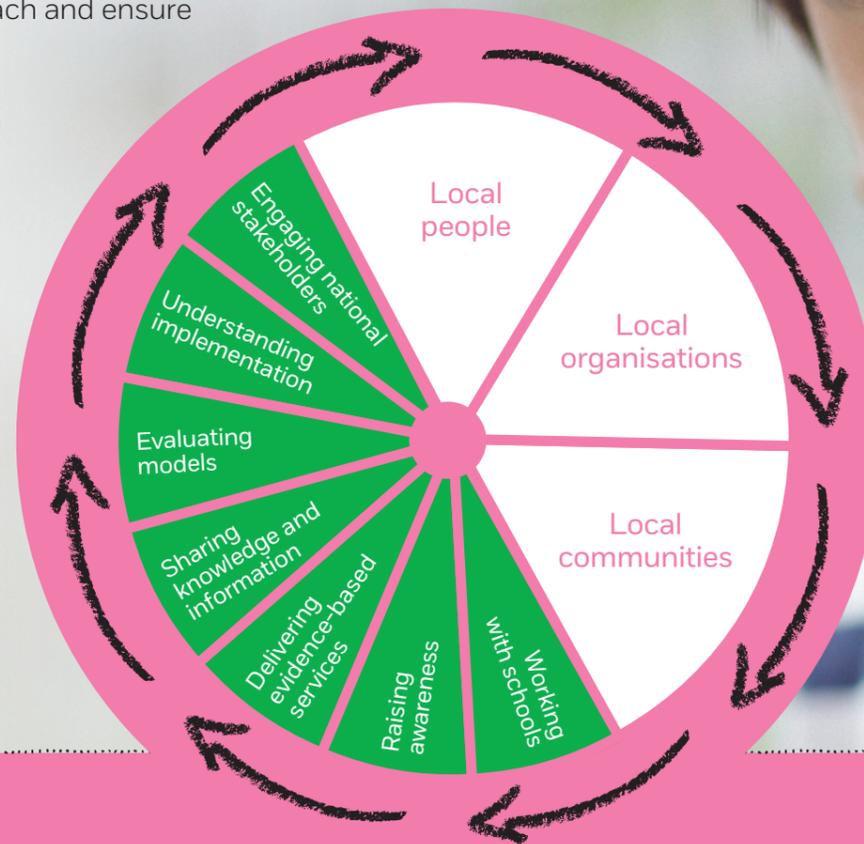
We can all make a difference by:

- improving our own knowledge about abuse – why and how it happens and what we can do to prevent it
- educating children – so they know what abuse is, that it's never their fault and if it happens they should tell a trusted adult or friend
- protecting children online – by talking to children about online risks and how they can stay safe
- protecting children in the places where they spend time – working with our schools, sports clubs, faith groups and other settings to keep children safe
- ensuring those who have abused children have access to treatment that will make them less likely to abuse in the future, and those who are concerned about their thoughts have access to help so that they do not commit abuse
- providing children with whatever help and support they need to keep safe and to get their life, and their healthy development, back on track.

There are many ways in which the NSPCC can support local partnerships to achieve this shared vision in the context of on-going spending cuts and increasing pressure on workforce capacity. This includes our national expertise in knowledge and information; service design, development and implementation; evaluation; work with schools; local campaigns and safeguarding in communities; helplines; and innovative public health approaches to sexual abuse prevention.

Place-based approaches share several common elements:

- a clearly defined location
- a robust and collaborative governance group made up of people from a wide range of sectors and accountable for direction, implementation and results
- a strong local partnership board to identify local needs and develop and implement localised strategies and programmes based on best available evidence of what works
- multiple “access points” to maximise reach and ensure effective change across the system
- flexibility in terms of the type or intensity of intervention to better align and target resources
- community-wide media strategies which maximise reach, building public and political momentum
- use of data to ensure continuous improvement, allowing partners to learn and adjust as required.



Designed in partnership with local people

Our vision is to create Together for Childhood initiatives in up to three local communities around the UK to prevent child sexual abuse in partnership with other agencies and organisations working with children and young people.

We want to combine national and local NSPCC resources and evidence with local resources and expertise to help realise a shared vision of keeping children safe. Individual Together for Childhood initiatives will be developed to meet the needs of local communities and in consultation with local groups.

The core principles, by which Together for Childhood activities will be tested, are:

- **Co-creation** through relationships with children and families, local partners and community members
- **Continuous learning** and use of evidence to be the best we can
- **Strengths-based**, building from individual, community and service strengths, respecting and honouring what is good
- **Inclusivity and accessibility** ensuring diverse representation of community members during creation, consultation and delivery
- **In partnership**, sustaining effective partnerships at all levels
- **Sustainability** by embedding local ownership, value and capacity.

Together, we can achieve positive outcomes for children, young people and their families, communities, professionals and services, and across systems:

Service and professionals:

More evidence-based sexual abuse services are available for children, young people and their families

Professionals who work with children are more confident in identifying, addressing and preventing sexual abuse

More evidence-based services are available for children and young people with harmful sexual behaviour and adult perpetrators to prevent them reoffending

What we can achieve together will be greater than the sum of our individual efforts

Systems:

Local authority children's services, health, the police and voluntary sector work together in a coordinated and sustainable way to help prevent sexual abuse

Communities:

Community members know what sexual abuse is and recognise that sexual abuse can be prevented

Community members respond appropriately if they have concerns relating to sexual abuse about a child or family

Children, young people and families:

Children and families know about healthy relationships and what sexual abuse is

Children and families know where to access support and services if they are concerned about sexual abuse

Children and families take action if they are concerned about sexual abuse

Prevention of child sexual abuse



Evaluation

In addition to pioneering a place-based approach to tackling child abuse and neglect, we are committed to robustly evaluating what we do. That will be challenging because the delivery model for each area will be different - tailored to local needs, conditions and capacity. An intensive and multi-stranded evaluation will be required for each area, in addition to measuring the impact for families and the local population as a whole.

It will require Together for Childhood teams, partners and evaluators to work closely together to develop evaluation capacity. The NSPCC will also convene a National Expert Evaluation Advisory Group to ensure the partnership has access to the latest thinking on how to evaluate prevention.

How can Together for Childhood prevent child sexual abuse?

There isn't a typical victim or a typical perpetrator of child sexual abuse, but there are factors that can help prevent sexual abuse in any community. A community where there is less sexual abuse is one where: the places where children spend time are made safer; adults take action to keep children safe; children know what abuse is and are able to speak out; and there is early and effective action if problems do emerge.

We need to address all of these things to make children safer.

1. Creating safer environments

By making changes to the places where children spend time, we can make them safer.

Contextual safeguarding is an approach to safeguarding children and young people that recognises the risks to those outside the home and promotes ways of preventing, identifying, assessing and intervening. For example:

- Schools can be made safer if they create a culture where it's clear what is and isn't acceptable behaviour between students, so there's no tolerance of sexual harassment. By making simple changes to the physical environment of the school this risk can be reduced.
- Local authorities and police forces can work with hotels, taxi firms and other retail services to identify situations where sexual exploitation may occur and appropriate responses.
- The online environment can be made safer by improving the knowledge of children and those who care for them about privacy settings, reporting procedures and filtering functions. Educating schools in the latest guidance on sexting and technology-assisted harmful sexual behaviour can improve confidence in dealing with these increasingly prevalent issues.

Changes like these work because they increase the effort needed to commit the crime, increase the risks of detection and remove the excuses for inappropriate behaviour.

2. Adults taking action

If adults understand what sexual abuse is, what a risky situation looks like, and what to do if they are concerned, we can keep children safer.

Better informed communities are safer communities. Sexual abuse is more likely when families don't recognise the risks involved and therefore don't take the action required to keep a child safe. Some people think sexual abuse doesn't happen in 'families like theirs' so don't think through the risks they may be facing.

Adults taking action starts with adults listening to children so they pick up on warning signs and the child knows that if they voice a worry they will be listened to and believed. This could be, for example, parents using PANTS materials and messages – a simple way to talk to children about sexual abuse. Or neighbours knowing they can call the NSPCC helpline if they see something that just doesn't feel quite right.



3. Children can speak out

Children need to know what sexual abuse is, that it's never okay, and that it's never their fault.

It is never the responsibility of children to protect themselves from sexual abuse, but helping them to understand that they deserve respect, can speak out, and be kept safe will better protect them. For example, our Speak out. Stay safe programme visits primary schools to teach children what kinds of behaviour are not okay and who to turn to if they are ever worried. Also, Childline gives children a confidential place to turn if they are worried that something isn't right.

4. Earlier and more effective help if problems emerge

Children need effective help when problems are first identified.

If sexual abuse does happen, we need to make sure it doesn't happen again. We need to provide children with whatever help and support they need to keep safe and to get their life, and their healthy development, back on track. This might mean looking at the environment where the abuse happened and thinking about whether any changes

can be made to make it safer for children in the future. Or looking at what support parents or carers may need to protect the child from future abuse.

It also means finding out who abused that child and taking steps to make sure they do not abuse a child again. We need to ensure that sexual abuse is recorded, investigated, justice is served, and that abusers have access to treatment that will make them less likely to abuse other children in the future, and those who are concerned about their thoughts have access to help before they go on to abuse.

While most children who experience sexual abuse do not go on to abuse others, some do – and we need to offer support which includes working with young people who have sexually abused others. We need to help those young people understand and address their behaviour, through programmes such as our Turn the Page service. In doing so, we can help children find ways to move away from their harmful sexual behaviour and have a positive, safe future.

Together for Childhood will be co-designed with local partners, but here are some examples of what's worked in other places and some new approaches we're testing:

Case Study: It's not ok (York)



The 'It's not OK' campaign in York launched in May 2015 as a partnership between the NSPCC, City of York, and the Local Safeguarding Children Board. The campaign targeted parents, children, professionals and the wider York community and aimed to increase awareness and understanding of sexual abuse and exploitation, and how to seek help. One of the highlights of the campaign was a piece of interactive forum theatre developed with York St John University to show children aged 11-12 years what sexual abuse and exploitation looks like through the stories of four characters. Over 1,800 children have seen the play and taken part in workshops to explore the issues raised by the play, leading to a number of disclosures. In addition, over 500 parents in York have attended workshops which have helped them to explore how they keep their children safe in their online world, looking at issues such as grooming and sexting.

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"In York, the NSPCC have been a close partner for many years. We have recently co-delivered the 'It's not OK in York' year-long campaign to raise awareness of child sexual abuse and exploitation. This has been a hugely successful collaboration between our LSCB and the NSPCC. The NSPCC have brought tremendous energy and profile to this work which has benefited greatly from their campaigning experience".

Jon Stonehouse, Director of Children's Services, York

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Read more at:

yor-ok.org.uk/young-people/Its%20not%20okay/its-not-ok.htm

Case Study: Keeping Safe (Northern Ireland)



Keeping Safe is a whole school programme that provides primary school children with the tools to keep them safe from bullying, neglect, physical, emotional, sexual, and domestic abuse. The materials have been developed across three themes: Healthy Relationships, My Body, and Being Safe. Training, support and a raft of resources, such as lesson plans, posters and animations, have also ensured a consistent approach for staff, school leaders, teaching and non-teaching staff, pupils and parents. Two workshops have also been developed to build parents' skills and confidence to talk to their children about these sensitive issues.

This project is one of the largest of its type in the world involving over 4,500 children, and has the potential to influence the education system in Northern Ireland, the rest of the United Kingdom and international good practice. This programme will be evaluated using a Randomised Control Trial (RCT) to gather robust evidence about its effectiveness.

Read more about Keeping Safe at:

nspcc.org.uk/services-and-resources/working-with-schools/keepingchildren-safe-in-northern-ireland

Case Study: Harmful sexual behaviour operational framework (UK wide)

Sexual abuse perpetrated by children and young people is not a rare phenomenon. At least one third of all sexual offences against children and young people in the UK are committed by other children and young people, and the extent of sexual abuse may be much higher.

NSPCC and Research in Practice have led and coordinated the development of an HSB framework with input from a range of service delivery organisations (including the Lucy Faithfull Foundation and Barnardo's) and a wide group of current experts in the field of HSB. The framework aims to help local areas develop and improve responses to this important child protection challenge. It aligns with the NICE guidelines on HSB (nice.org.uk/guidance/NG55).

Key feedback from eight local areas who piloted it was:

- Each authority appreciated the operational usefulness of the framework, and welcomed the innovative approach which guided decision making and refocused the attention on HSB and its links to CSE.
- The framework acted as a platform for discussion and reflection on current policies and practice: strengths and weaknesses were identified, improvements were highlighted, and action plans were developed.
- Local authorities welcomed the integrated, multi-level, multi-agency approach towards service provision, and reiterated the importance of early identification, assessment, and intervention in relation to children and young people displaying HSB.
- The framework acted as a persuasive device to help them to argue for the retention of services, secure funding and actively engage partners at multiple levels alongside other current priorities, such as tackling CSE.

Read more at:

nspcc.org.uk/hsbframework

Case Study: PANTS

Parents play the most important role in keeping their children safe. But they told us they found it difficult to talk to their children about sexual abuse, and that there was little freely available guidance to support them. We wanted to help parents and carers keep their children safe from sexual abuse by having simple, age-appropriate conversations. We want this to be one of those chats that we all have alongside road safety, cleaning your teeth, and eating your greens. With PANTS, parents don't have to mention sex or 'abuse' at all.

Since the campaign launched in July 2013:

- 36% of parents with children aged 4-8 recognise the campaign (rising to 45% of mothers).
- 63% of parents that recall the campaign have spoken to their children about keeping safe from abuse vs. 46% of parents before the campaign began – around 400,000 additional parents.
- We are aware of one conviction and a number of other disclosures directly as a result of the campaign.

The national PANTS campaign has been adapted and developed into local campaigns in areas such as Coventry, Liverpool, Norfolk, Worcestershire, and Sunderland where we have shared co-branded materials across their local communities.

Read more at:

nspcc.org.uk/PANTS

Next steps



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The NSPCC are now approaching selected local authorities and other agencies, with the intention of supporting up to three Together for Childhood sites around the UK to prevent child sexual abuse.

For more information, please contact TogetherforChildhood@nspcc.org.uk