

# “It’s a lonely journey...”

## A Rapid Evidence Assessment on child sexual abuse within the family environment



We asked Middlesex University to do some research on child sexual abuse in the family environment. These are some of the things they found.



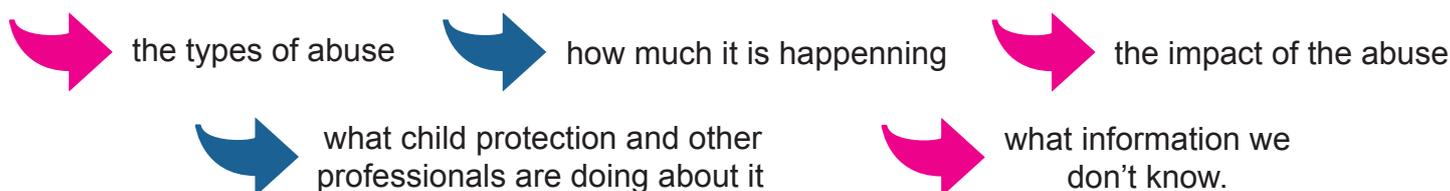
Middlesex University

## Background

The Office of the Children’s Commissioner’s Inquiry into child sexual exploitation in gangs and groups made us aware of how many children and young people are sexually abused within the family environment and how much this goes unnoticed.



This piece of work has brought together research other people have done on child sexual abuse within the family environment. It looked at:



## Some of what we have found out

Both boys and girls are victims of sexual abuse but most victims are girls.

Both men and women sexually abuse children but most sexual abuse is by men.

A lot of child sexual abuse is never reported and many cases don't go to court.

Evidence shows the child protection and criminal justice systems often don't listen to children enough.

Adult women who sexually abuse children may have more severe mental health issues than men who sexually abuse children.

Children who show harmful sexual behaviours often have poor social skills, have experienced abuse and / or have mental health issues.

Lots of child sexual abuse is committed by close relatives or people who the child knows.

Legal processes, like going to court, can be very hard for children.

If it's right for the child, it is better to support the whole family than just them.

## What are the gaps?

-  The views of children have not been heard when attempting to understand child sexual abuse within the family environment. This is often due to adults being worried that the topic is too sensitive, but has resulted in the views of children not being taken into account.
-  We don't know how many children in England have been sexually abused.
-  We don't know much about how well the help given to children who have been sexually abused is working.
-  People don't agree on how to define child sexual abuse within the family environment.
-  There is not much research on the experiences of children who are from Black or minority ethnic groups, children who are disabled and children who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgendered.

## What's next?

We will be completing a two year Inquiry into child sexual abuse in the family environment. The Inquiry will focus on the gaps identified above by:

looking at the types and amount of this sort of abuse in England including among groups of children whose voice is usually less heard

looking at how organisations prevent and respond to child sexual abuse in England and the impact it has on children

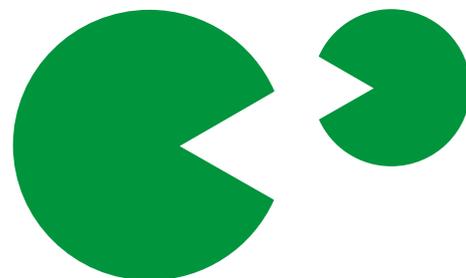
making recommendations so that the identification and prevention of child sexual abuse is improved.

## Help and advice

If you are worried about yourself, your child or someone you know, there are a number of people you can contact:

**ChildLine**  
0800 1111  
[www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)

If you are a parent or work with children and young people, you can also visit [www.thinkuknow.co.uk](http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk)



**The Office of the Children's Commissioner**  
Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street  
London SW1P 2QF

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