

Findings from the NSPCC's Research on the
**Maltreatment of Children and
Young People in the UK**



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The purpose of this research

- In 2000, the NSPCC published research on the prevalence of child maltreatment in the UK, based on retrospective interviews with 18-24 year olds (Cawson et al ,2000). This report is now 10 years old and we decided to conduct new research to:
- Measure the frequency of lifelong and *current* experiences of child maltreatment in a random probability sample of the UK.
- Measure the prevalence of child maltreatment in a manner comparable to other large scale studies currently underway across the globe.
- Investigate risk and protective factors associated with child maltreatment.
- Explore in depth young people's perceptions of helpful and unhelpful interventions and the range of factors they consider helpful to stop abuse.
- Explore any changes in the prevalence of child maltreatment since the 2000 publication.

Methodology

- UK wide household survey. Conducted March 2009 - Nov 2009.
- Random probability sampling of households from Post Code Address file.
- Advance letter sent, 10 pound voucher, confidentiality promised unless immediate, serious risk of harm.
- 6,196 CASI & A-CASI interviews of which:
 - 2,160 parents or guardians of children aged 1 month to 10 years.
 - 2,275 children aged 11-17 years (caregivers also interviewed).
 - 1,761 young adults aged 18-24 years.
- Overall response rate 60.4%.
- The respondents were broadly similar to the UK under 25s population; regards gender, ethnicity, income etc
- The data was weighted to adjust for survey and group differences.

Ethical issues

- Ethical guidance followed eg CAHRV, ISPCAN, protocol, expert consultation and review process with young people and survivors.
- Balance between honesty about the survey and putting off or frightening participants.
- Pilot with 318 households.
- CASI & A-CASI interviews used to allow privacy, safety and 'distance'.
- Support options offered – e.g debrief, checking and closing questions, access to ChildLine and counsellor.
- Child protection and confidentiality.
- Red flag and review process to identify immediate risks.

Brief review of some of our findings



Slide 5

L3

The image does not match the ages of the young people we are talking about

Loll, 08/02/2011

Young adults aged 18 to 24 years reported less childhood maltreatment in 2009 compared with results from our survey in 1998-9.



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Comparing 1998-9 and 2009

- Physical violence during childhood showed a statistically significant decline from 13% in 1998-9 to 10% in 2009.
- Prolonged verbal aggression showed a statistically significant decline from 14.5% in 1998-9 to 6% in 2009.
- Coerced sexual acts under the age of 16 showed a statistically significant decline from 6.8% in 1998-9 to 5% in 2009.
- Levels of neglect, as measured in 1998-9, were very similar between the two studies. Around 10% reported that they often or always had at least one problem with lack of parental care.

Findings from children and
parents on the past year and
lifetime prevalence of child
maltreatment.

Key findings child maltreatment

- 3.9% of children and young people under age 18 reported physical, sexual or emotional abuse or neglect by a parent or guardian in the past 12 months. (6% for 11 - 17s)
- 1 in 7 children and young people (14.1%) reported maltreatment by a parent or guardian during childhood. (21.9% for 11 to 17s)
- 1 in 9 (11%) had experienced severe maltreatment during childhood by any perpetrator. (18.6% for 11 to 17s)
- 1 in 12 (8.4%) were severely maltreated by a parent/guardian. (13.4% for 11 to 17s)
- 2.2% were severely maltreated by a parent/guardian and also maltreated in the past year. (3.7% for 11 to 17s)

General population figures

- 505,544 children and young people aged under 18 in the UK population likely to have been maltreated in the past 12 months.
- 12 times more than the number with child protection plans/on child protection registers.
- For 11 to 17s, 18.6% severely maltreated in childhood. This is equivalent to 973,736 UK children.
- For 11 to 17s, 3.7% severely maltreated in childhood and maltreated in past 12 months. This is equivalent to 195,025 UK children.

Types of family maltreatment

- 8.4% of under 18s reported neglect by a parent/guardian during childhood. (13.3% for 11 to 17s)
- 5% were emotionally abused. (6.8% for 11 to 17s)
- 3.6% reported physical violence (excluding 'smacking') from a parent or guardian. (6.9% for 11 to 17s)
- 0.1% reported sexual abuse by a parent/guardian, all was forced contact sexual abuse. (0.1% for 11 to 17s)
- 1 in 7 (14.2%) had been exposed to domestic violence. (17.5% for 11 to 17s)
- 41.6% experienced physical punishment. (45,9% for 11 to 17s)

Sexual abuse -

Under 18s and adults who are known or related to the child are the most common perpetrators

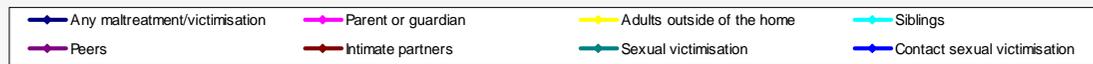
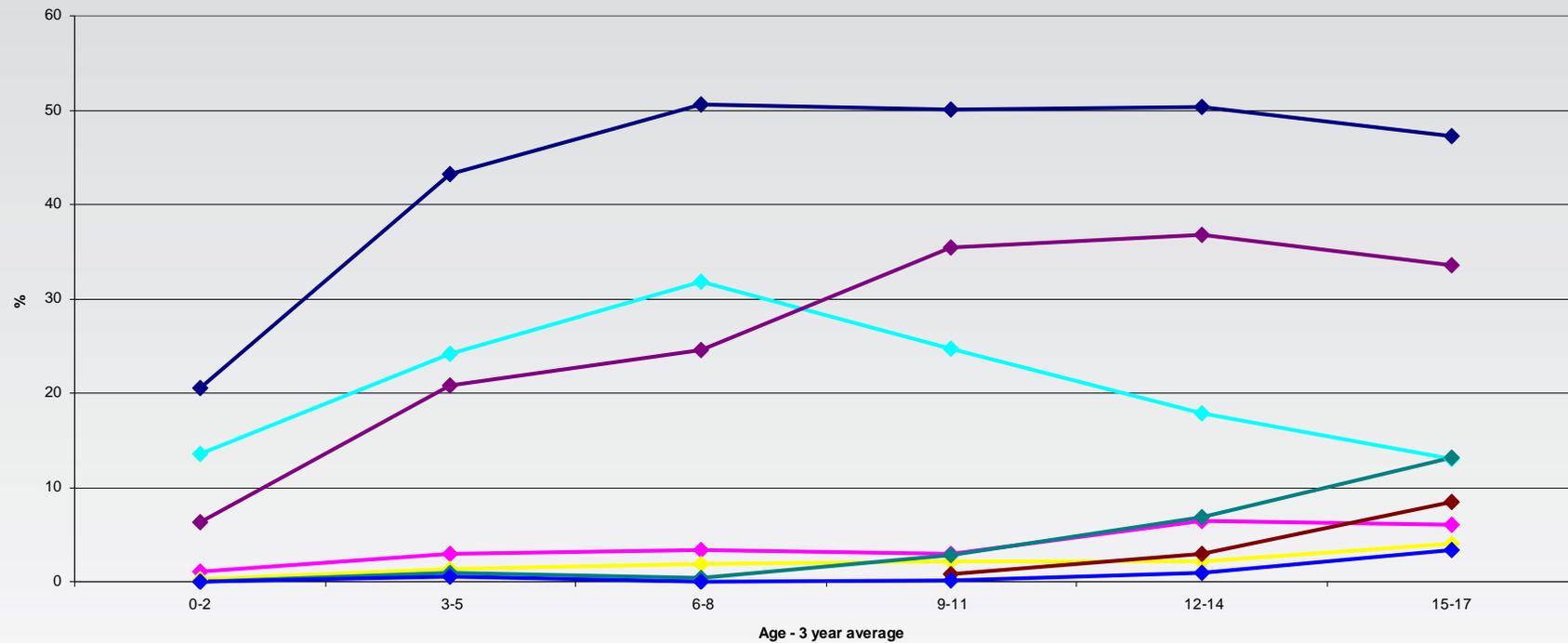


Key findings on sexual abuse of under 18s

- 1 in 14 (7.3%) reported experiences of sexual abuse by adults or by peers. (16.5% for 11 to 17s)
- 4.1% had been sexually abused in the past year. (9.4% for 11 to 17s)
- 1 in 50 (1.9%) had experienced forced contact sexual abuse. (3.9% for 11 to 17s)
- Peers, including young people's intimate partners, were the most frequently reported perpetrators responsible for 65.9% of forced contact sexual abuse. (51% peers, 21.8% adults not living with the child, 20.7% intimate partners, 4.8% parents/guardians, 3.6% siblings)

The risks of maltreatment and victimisation by different types of perpetrators vary with the age and development of the child

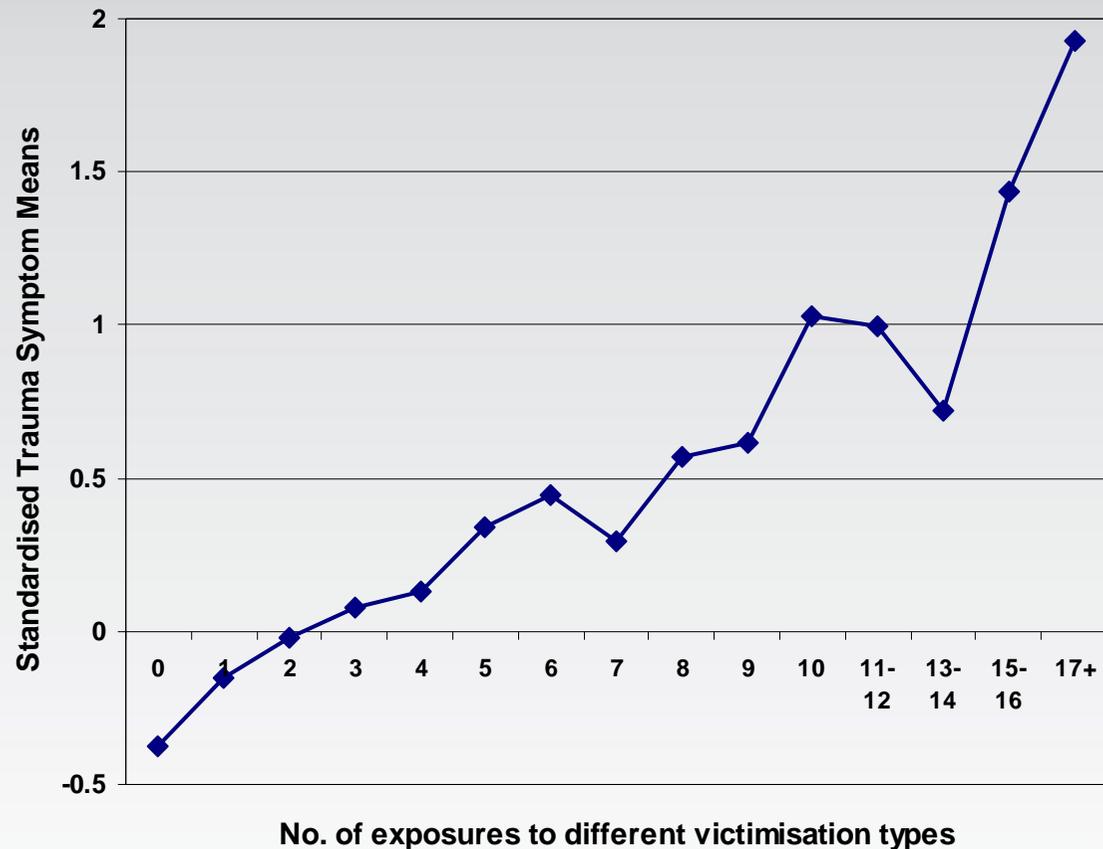
Past year rates of maltreatment and victimisation by age of the child



Maltreatment and victimisation experiences are statistically associated with higher trauma symptoms, suicidal feelings and delinquent behaviour

Experiences of victimisation accumulate over childhood. The most victimised show highest trauma and behavioural impact.

Trauma symptom levels by total number of victimisation types



A minority of children are highly vulnerable as they experience multiple forms of maltreatment and victimisation.

Children at high risk

Children were more likely to suffer multiple forms of abuse and victimisation:

- as they got older;
- if they had special educational needs or a long-standing disability or illness;
- if they had exposure to higher rates of non-victimisation adversity (such as a family bereavement); or
- if they had a parent with enduring physical, learning or psychiatric problems.

Summary

- We found some evidence from young adults of a decline in some forms of maltreatment during childhood compared with 1998-9.
- Children and parents report rates of *current* maltreatment of under 18s that are considerably higher than those known to children's services and the police.
- Maltreatment and victimisation experiences vary developmentally. Parents or known persons (adults and peers) present the greatest risk but children are exposed to a wider range of perpetrators as they age.
- The impact of victimisation is cumulative – children who are maltreated, sexually abused or exposed to domestic violence are more likely to experience other types of victimisation throughout childhood.
- A small group of children and young people are very vulnerable being abused and victimised in many areas of their lives.
- Children who experienced any type of victimisation, were more likely to be anxious, depressed, suicidal or to have problem behaviour than children without these victimisation experiences.

Implications



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Implications

- Social workers need to focus on those most in need and be enabled to work effectively with other agencies – triage.
- Any professional coming into contact with children must be alert to potential abuse and equipped to respond promptly – health, schools and early years play a vital role.
- Prevention, public education and respectful relationship skills.
- Confidential support for every child at all ages - ChildLine.
- Challenges ahead in creating a step change to a safer society in the context of spending cuts.