

support for adult survivors

Often survivors feel the need to speak to someone about the effects childhood sexual abuse has had on their lives. Your feelings are individual – no two survivors will feel exactly the same. Talking to someone can help the recovery process.

EWRASAC offers telephone, face-to-face, group, letter and email support to women and girls aged 12 and over who have experienced sexual violence at any time in their lives. This includes rape, sexual assault, childhood sexual abuse or any form of sexual violence. You can call us on our helpline: **0131 556 9437**.

confidentiality

What you tell us remains confidential within our support team. We will not tell anyone you are being supported. We will not give anyone any information about you, unless you want us to.

There are some circumstances, however, when we are required by law to share information with other agencies. A support worker will always discuss this with you first.

If you need more information on our confidentiality policy, please phone us or speak to a support worker.

useful contact numbers

Edinburgh Crisis Centre

24-hour helpline for adults who have used mental health services

0808 801 0414

Rape and Abuse Line

Helpline for male and female survivors

0808 800 0123 (answered by women)

0808 800 0122 (answered by men)

Rape Crisis Scotland Helpline

Freephone helpline open daily:

6pm-12midnight

08088 01 03 02

www.rapecrisisscotland.org.uk

Samaritans

0131 221 9999

The Amethyst Team (Family Protection Unit)

0131 316 6600

All our leaflets are available in larger print. If you would like copies please contact us on 0131 556 9437.

We are committed to providing a high quality support service. For this reason, from time to time, our helpline is monitored internally for training purposes.

July 2008



edinburgh women's rape
and sexual abuse centre
support, advice and advocacy for women and girls

information for
survivors of childhood
sexual abuse
helpline: **0131 556 9437**

administration, outreach
& training: 0131 557 6737

minicom: 0131 557 6757

fax: 0131 558 1612

support@ewrasac.org.uk
info@ewrasac.org.uk

c/o P.O. Box 120
Brunswick Road
Edinburgh, EH7 5WX

Registered Charity Ref. SC 006208

Registered as a limited company by guarantee No. 297142.
Registered Company Address: Edinburgh Women's Rape
and Sexual Abuse Centre, c/o Quartermile One, 15 Lauriston
Place, Edinburgh, EH3 9EP

information about childhood sexual abuse

Childhood sexual abuse is any type of sexual assault on a child under 16. The World Health Organisation estimates that 1 in 5 girls and 1 in 9 boys are sexually abused in childhood.

Sexual abuse can take many different forms. This may involve physical contact or non-contact acts. They may include:

- Sexual touching, masturbation or sexual intercourse
- Sexual talk and showing pornography
- Watching a child bathe, dress or undress

Research shows that in more than three quarters of cases, the sexual abuse is committed by an adult who the child knows and trusts, rather than a stranger. This can be a relative, family friend or someone in a position of trust. The vast majority of abusers are men, but women are also capable of sexual abuse.

myths about childhood sexual abuse

Myth: If you were abused as a child, you will become an abuser as an adult

Truth: If you consider that 95% of all offenders are male and 5% are female and that 87% of all children abused are female – the figures just don't add up. This is yet another excuse for shifting responsibility. The only person responsible and to blame is the abuser.

Myth: It's just a bit of a kiss and cuddle that's gone too far

Truth: Child abuse is not an expression of love or affection, it is not playful or fun – it is an abuse of a child by an adult in a position of power, trust or authority.

Myth: Children make up stories of abuse and sexual assault

Truth: Children do not make up stories. They do not have the language or the explicit sexual knowledge to describe the abuse unless they have had first hand knowledge of it. To say they falsely accuse their relatives of abuse is another way of covering up the crime – a common threat made by abusers is 'no one will believe you'.

why do children stay silent?

Children do not always tell someone about their abuse. The NSPCC estimate that 72% of sexually abused children did not tell anyone about the abuse at the time, 27% told someone later, and round 31% still had not told anyone about their experiences by early adulthood.

There are many reasons why they may not feel able to speak out. They may:

- Not be able to describe or understand what has happened to them
- Have been threatened with further abuse and violence if they tell
- Be afraid that no one will believe them
- Feel it was their fault
- Want to protect the family or even the abuser

facts about childhood sexual abuse

The abuser is always to blame:

- Children are powerless to stop abuse. You cannot be responsible for consenting to an act you didn't understand or which you were forced into.
- No matter how long ago you were abused, your feelings about what happened to you are important. You have the right to be listened to no matter what you want to say about your abuse.
- We recognise that some children are made or forced to abuse other children as part of their abuse. They often have no choice and are not to blame.

Some possible effects of abuse:

- Losing self-confidence and self esteem
- Feeling dirty, ashamed, suicidal, guilty, angry, sad, confused or to blame
- Being unable to trust people
- Experiencing difficulty forming relationships
- Experiencing flashbacks of the abuse

Adult survivors may cope with past abuse by:

- Self-harming/self-injuring such as cutting, scratching, burning etc.
- Blocking, forgetting or minimising the abuse, for example with drug or alcohol misuse.
- Breaking ties with, or confronting the abuser.
- Speaking about the past abuse and receiving support, or writing about it.