

North Ayrshire Child Sexual Abuse Strategy 2020

Introduction

There is clear evidence that children and young people continue to be sexually abused in their families and in our communities. More than 2 in every 5 sexual crimes recorded by Police Scotland in 2015/16 had a child victim - that's 4,311 sexual crimes against children in that year alone, and many more will have gone unreported.

A study by the NSPCC (National Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Children) in 2011 estimated that almost 1 in every 10 young people aged 11 to 17 in the UK will experience sexual abuse within a 12-month period, with almost 1 in every 20 young people aged 11- 17 in the UK experiencing sexual abuse at some point in their lifetime.

When we apply these figures to North Ayrshire, that means almost 1000 young people aged between 11 and 17 are likely to experience sexual abuse each year, with over 500 in the same age range experiencing sexual abuse at some point in their lifetime.

There are many types of child sexual abuse, all of which can lead to long-lasting hurt and difficulties in life and relationships if support is not available. It can be extremely scary and difficult for young people to speak up about their experiences.

This document is about the work that North Ayrshire Child Protection Committee and our partners will do to stop the sexual abuse of children and young people and to protect and support them.

Children and young people need to see and believe that we are genuinely open to listening to and supporting them, without them being judged or blamed. In order to achieve this, child sexual abuse must become something we talk about more openly. We must also ensure that all adults know what to do to protect and support a young person who is experiencing abuse.

We must also make sure that support is available for any child, young person or adult who has experienced sexual abuse in the past.

What is child sexual abuse?

When a child or young person is sexually abused, they are forced, tricked or tempted into sexual activities. Sexual abuse can happen anywhere, and it doesn't always involve physical contact. Sexual abuse of a child or young person can include:

Contact abuse:

- Sexual touching of any part of their body
- Rape or sexually penetrating them
- Forcing or tricking them to take part in sexual activity
- Making them undress or sexually touch someone else

Abuse without contact:

- Someone exposing themselves or flashing
- Being shown pornography
- Being expected to watch sexual acts
- Making them masturbate
- Forcing or tricking them into making, watching or sharing pictures or videos of child sexual abuse
- Tricking or forcing them into taking part in sexual activities or conversations online or on a smartphone

It can be hard for a child to understand that what they are experiencing is sexual abuse or that it is wrong for someone to do that to them, and even when they do know it is wrong then they are often too frightened to tell anyone.

It is never a child's fault if they are sexually abused, and it is important that all children know this.

Who is at risk of child sexual abuse?

All children and young people could be at risk of sexual abuse. However, facts and figures tell us that some children and young people are even more at risk. These may include children and young people who:

- are in care
- are missing, maybe having run away
- are unseen, for example not attending school or other places where someone can look out for them
- have a disability or additional support needs
- are young carers
- are LGBTQI – young people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or intersex
- are black, Asian or minority ethnic (BAME)

And the children least likely to talk about being sexually abused include:

- Younger children
- Those being abused by a family member
- Children with disabilities
- Children from black, Asian and minority ethnic communities
- Boys

Vision – What we want to see

We want everyone to understand what child sexual abuse is and the many forms it can take, and we want to ensure that children and young people in North Ayrshire are safe from sexual abuse and harm.

It is important that everyone in North Ayrshire understand that they have a part to play in keeping children safe and that they are prepared to do the right things to listen to, support and protect a child who is experiencing sexual abuse, or a child who has experienced this in the past.

This means that we need to make sure everyone, no matter their age or whether they have their own children, know who to turn to for help if a child or young person confides in them, or if they have concerns about a child who they think could be experiencing sexual abuse. As well as adults, other children and young people are often confided in by those who are sexually abused, and they also offer important support.

Our work follows the information and advice set out in 'Getting it Right for Every Child' – this is the Scottish Government's plan for the way organisations should support all children.

Our work also follows the information and advice in The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child – this sets out the rights that every child and young person has.

Outcomes – What we want to happen

- To see a reduction in the number of children experiencing sexual abuse in North Ayrshire.
- To ensure that children know how to get help and are confident to ask for help if they experience any form of sexual abuse.
- To ensure that children experiencing sexual abuse get the right help and support from the right person at the right time.
- To ensure that everyone in North Ayrshire looks out for children and young people in order to prevent them from experiencing abuse.
- To ensure that everyone in North Ayrshire knows how to protect children and young people from sexual abuse and takes their responsibility seriously.

These outcomes have three areas we think are most important: Prevention, Protection and Support and Recovery.

Prevention – How will we stop child sexual abuse from happening?

We need more people to know about child sexual abuse so we can stop it from happening. To do this, we need to encourage more people to talk openly about child sexual abuse in our communities to raise awareness that this is happening.

We also need everyone to know how they can help if they are approached by a young person or are concerned about the welfare of a young person.

What is the most important work we will do to prevent child sexual abuse?

- Make sure all of our work supports the children who are most at risk.
- Make sure the Relationships, Sexual Health and Parenthood programme is used in all nurseries and schools. This programme has been developed in Scottish schools to support learning about healthy relationships. It covers all age groups and many learning activities

have information that can be shared with families at home through leaflets and other types of media.

- Train staff working with children and young people how to better understand child sexual abuse using the Brooke Traffic Light Toolkit. This easy-to-use tool helps people working with children and young people to notice, understand and respond well to sexual behaviour in young people and ensures workers can recognise what kind of behaviour can be expected at all the different ages and stage of development of children and young people.
- Use materials that are right for the age of children and young people to teach them skills they need to stay safe online.
- Have media campaigns to tell more people about child sexual abuse, ensuring that this reaches communities who do not speak English and those who are rarely in touch with or heard by services. This will include making information available at places like libraries and community events, as well as local newspapers and social media and online.
- Have campaigns to tell children about sexual abuse. This can include promoting things like the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) 'Talk Pants' and 'Join Pantosaurus' information. These can help start some of the difficult conversations about sexual abuse and help children understand that their body belongs to them.
- Have ChildLine and ParentLine Scotland information and contact details displayed in all public areas. This will help children and adults find the support they need if they're worried about child sexual abuse.
- Support all volunteers across North Ayrshire to help them know what child sexual abuse is and what to do about it.
- Tell more people about the online UPSTREAM Project resources. This is a website that has lots of useful information and support for anyone concerned about child sexual abuse.
- Ensure that all contractual staff of North Ayrshire Council have had child protection training, as well as those who are contracted to NAC from other companies or agencies such as taxi drivers.
- Make sure community groups using North Ayrshire buildings and facilities have had child sexual abuse training.
- Create safer environments for children and young people. Check regularly on places where young people are known to spend time and ensure they have good lighting and CCTV.
- Teach children and young people the skills to keep themselves and others safe.

Protection

It is important to protect children and young people from sexual abuse, as well as protecting those at risk of sexual abuse.

We need to stop sexual abuse that is happening now and ensure that everyone knows how to keep children and young people safe.

What are the most important things we will do to protect children?

- Make sure our work helps children and young people who could be more at risk.
- Make sure people who work with children, volunteer or are parents/carers of children know what to do if someone tells them about sexual abuse.
- Provide training for all staff on how to protect children who have been abused.

- Provide training on Interagency Referral Discussion (IRD). This is when staff who know a child or young person who is being abused share information about what has happened and decide what to do next to keep them safe, ensuring that the child's needs are the main focus of the discussion and making sure the child feels in control as much as possible.
- Help and support the child or young person to say who is their key adult and safe person. This is someone that they trust and can talk to for support. This person should be involved in the whole process if possible, which should help the child to feel safe and be able to say more about what has happened. The child's well-being will be a priority throughout.
- Make sure the community is safe from the person who has harmed the child.

Support and Recovery

It's important that children and adults who have experienced child sexual abuse have easy access to the right supports that will avoid a crisis and prevent further harm, and that they are helped to be able to believe that recovery from trauma is possible.

What are the most important things we will do in support and recovery?

- Make sure our work helps all children who could be at risk of harm.
- Ensure support is available to all child and adult survivors when they want support. This includes things such as counselling, play or art therapy and family support.
- Help families to understand the impact of child sexual abuse and ensure support is available to all family members. This will make sure child and adult survivors are understood and supported well.
- Work in communities to help people understand the impact of child sexual abuse and make sure that people know what to do if a child or adult survivor confides in them.
- Ensure that support is easy to find, that the type of support is right for each person, and that support is in an environment that the survivor is comfortable with, for example in their home, or in a safe local setting.
- Ensure that people who work with children have access to training that supports them to understand the impact of child sexual abuse and know how to respond appropriately.
- Ensure that those who work with child or adult survivors of child sexual abuse have access to practical and emotional support for themselves so that they can work effectively with others to promote recovery.

Who is in charge of this plan?

North Ayrshire Child Protection Committee is responsible for implementing this plan and ensuring that it is working well.

The plan was developed in partnership with representatives from a number of organisations:

- Barnardo's
- Children 1st
- Police Scotland
- NHS Ayrshire & Arran

- North Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership
- North Ayrshire Council Education Team
- North Ayrshire Council Housing Team

We also asked a number of other organisations, children, young people and families what they thought of the plan. They told us what they thought of it and what needed to change. We will review the plan every year to ensure it is working well.

Further information

There are a number of websites and helplines available where you can learn more about child sexual abuse, how to report any concerns you may have, or for advice on what to do if a child or young person who has experienced/is experiencing child sexual abuse turns to you for help.

North Ayrshire Child Protection Committee

The NACPC website provides information for the public, children and young people and professionals. This includes what to do if you are concerned about a child, links to various websites and helpful contact numbers and guidance for professionals working within North Ayrshire.

<http://childprotectionnorthayrshire.info/cpc/>

The Upstream Project

A resource for anyone who wants to know more about the prevention of child sexual abuse and how you can contribute and help.

<https://www.theupstreamproject.org.uk/>

CEOP – Child Exploitation and Online Protection

Protects children from harm online and offline.

<https://www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre>

Think You Know

The education programme from CEOP.

<https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk>

ChildLine

A telephone and email counselling service for children and young people provided by the NSPCC.

Phone 0800 1111 or visit <https://www.childline.org.uk>

ParentLine Scotland

Free, confidential support helpline for anyone concerned about or caring for a child in Scotland, provided by Children 1st.

Phone 08000 28 22 33 or visit <https://www.children1st.org/help-for-families/parentline-scotland/>

National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children

The NSPCC website contains resources on how to spot the signs of child sexual abuse, how to report abuse, and to how support the child through recovery.

<http://www.nspcc.org.uk>