

The Lives of Children and Young People who Sexually Harm

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Why do we need to know the Social and Behavioural histories of these young people?

“Attention to individuals’ internal capacity (e.g. knowledge, skills attitudes and values) and ecological contexts (e.g. social supports and opportunities) are critical for understanding the development of sexual offending and the interventions necessary to achieve psychological wellbeing and desistance from offending”

Male Perpetrators –Social and Behavioural Factors.

In 2005 we worked with a total of **24 males** who were referred by Social and Health Care. 13 of these were new referrals and 11 were from previous years.

- All were aged over 10 years at the time of referral. The average age was 13.3 years.

Of the total of 24 males:

- **10 (41%)** had disclosed that they had been **victims of sexual abuse**.
- **9 (37.5%)** had disclosed being **victims of emotional abuse**.
- **6 (25%)** had disclosed being **victims of physical abuse**.
- **11 (46%)** were known to have **witnessed domestic violence**.
- **2 (8%)** lived with a **parent** who had a **problem with alcohol**.
- **1(4%)** had a **parent** who had a **previous conviction** for a **sexual offence**.
- **22 (91%)** had experienced **discontinuity of care**.
- **2 (8%)** were living **in children's homes** at the time of referral.
- **2 (8%)** were in **residential school** during the week.
- **1(4%)** was in **foster care**.
- **3 (12%)** had been **adopted**.

Male Perpetrators – Social and Behavioural Factors. (Cont)

- **1 (4%)** had a history of **fire setting**.
- **3 (12.5%)** had a history of **violent behaviour**.
- **10 (42%)** had a statement of **special educational needs**.
- **12 (50%)** had **previous** contact with **social services**.
- **11 (46%)** had **previous** contact with **mental health services**.
- **11 (46%)** had **current** contact with **mental health services**.
- **4 (17%)** diagnosed with **ADHD**.
- **3 (12.5%)** diagnosed with **Tourettes**.
- **1 (4%)** known **alcohol, solvent or drug abuse**.

Male Perpetrators Victim's.

- **Total** number of victim's (established) **40**.
- **9 (37.5%)** of the young people had sexually abused more than one person.

Gender of Victims.

- **3 (12.5%)** sexually abused **both boys and girls**.
- **6 (25%)** sexually abused **boys only**.
- **15 (63%)** sexually abused **girls only (2 adult female victims)**.

Age of Victims.

- Age differential (**87%**) 2 – 12 years **younger** than perpetrator.
- **Average** age differential **4 years younger** than perpetrator.
- **3 (8%)** victims up to 2 years older than perpetrator.
- **2 (5%)** victims, adults > 18 years.

Relationship to Victims

- **2 (5%) victims** were **strangers**.
- **15 (37%)** of the **victims** were **family members**, including extended family.
- **23 (58%)** of the **victims** were **known to the perpetrators** through school, the local community and the looked after system.

The sexually abusive acts included:

Sexual Assault. (25)

Harassment S.2 Anti Harassment Act (1997). (1)

Rape. (6)

Sexual Assault by Penetration. (5)

Exposure. (6) (adults)

Female Perpetrators – Social and Behavioural Factors

- Since 2001 OXYAP have received 6 referrals regarding females.
- All were aged over 12 years at the time of referral. The average age was 13 years.
- **4 (66%)** had disclosed that they had been victims of sexual abuse. 1 of them displayed behaviour highly suggestive of having been sexually abused.
- Of the 4 who had disclosed being **victims of sexual abuse**:
 - 1 reported being sexually abused by their mother
 - 1 reported being sexually abused by their uncle
 - 1 reported being sexually abused by their father and step-brother
 - 1 reported being sexually abused by their father and brother
- **5 (83%)** had disclosed being **victims of emotional abuse**.
- **3 (50%)** had disclosed being **victims of physical abuse**.
- **5 (83%)** were known to have **witnessed domestic violence**.
- **4 (66%)** had lived with a parent who had a **problem with alcohol**.
- **1 (17%)** had a parent who had a **previous conviction** for a **sexual offence** of a voyeuristic nature.
- **6 (100%)** had experienced **discontinuity of care**.
- **3 (50%)** were in **foster care** at the time of the referral
- **1** went to live with a foster carer whilst we were working with them.

Female Perpetrators – Social and Behavioural Factors (cont)

- **0** had a history of fire- setting.
- **0** had a history of violent behaviour.
- **0** had a statement of special educational needs.
- **6 (100%)** had had previous contact with Social Services.
- **1 (17%)** had had previous contact with Mental Health Services and was diagnosed as having ADHD and oppositional defiance disorder.
- **0** had a problem with alcohol, solvents or drugs.

Female Perpetrators Victim's

- **Total** number of victim's (established) 14
- **4 (67%)** of the young people had sexually abused more than one person.
- All of these young people's victims were younger than themselves – age differential 2-7 years younger.
- The average age differential was 4 years.

Gender of Victim's

- **3 (50%)** of the young people sexually abused both boys and girls.
- **3 (50%)** of the young people abused boys only.

Relationship to victim

- All of the victims were known to the young people.
- **3 (50%)** of the young people sexually abused their victims whilst living in a foster or children's home with them.
- **3 (50%)** of the young people sexually abused their siblings.
- **4 (67%)** described some of the victims as their 'boyfriends' (despite age differential).

Research findings on Young Women who Sexually Abuse

- Findings of studies on young women who sexually abuse suggest that between 2% and 7% of juveniles who sexually abuse are female.
(Fehrenbach et al 1986)
- Recent UK study sample (sample 227) 92% of young people referred were male and 8% female.
(Taylor 2003)

Hunter et al (1993)

Reported on 10 adolescent females who were receiving treatment in a residential unit programme.

- 80% reported a childhood history of physical abuse.
- 100% reported a history of being sexually abused.
- They began committing sexual offences approximately five years after their first sexually abusive experience.
- The mean number of children they had sexually abused was 2.5

Matthews et al (1997)

Compared a sample of 67 young females and 70 young males who had displayed sexually abusive behaviour.

- 78% of the young women reported being a victim of sexual abuse, compared with 34% of the young men.
- 60% of the young women said that physical abuse had been a factor in their background, compared with 45% of the young men
- “ The authors conclude that the young women in the sample had typically experienced more chronic and extensive maltreatment in their childhoods, had been sexually abused at a younger age and were more than likely to have been sexually abused by more than one abuser.” (Hackett 2004)

Taylor (2003)

Reports data on 19 girls and young women, within his broader community study of 227 young people who had displayed sexually abusive behaviour

- 100% of the victims were known to the young women who had behaved in a sexually abusive manner.
- 80% of the victims were younger than the young women who behaved in a sexually abusive manner.
- “Taylor concludes that whilst it would be unwise to draw firm conclusions on the basis of such small numbers, it may be that girls and young women with harmful sexual behaviours are more inclined than males to select victims who are younger and are known to them.” (Hackett 2004).

Bumby and Bumby (1993)

Reported detailed findings from an in-patient sample of 12 adolescent females who had behaved in a sexually abusive manner.

- 75% sexually abused family members.
- 91% sexually abused whilst in a care giving situation, such as babysitting.
- 83% had a history of depression.
- 58% had made previous suicide attempts.
- 50% came from homes where they had witnessed domestic violence.
- 83% had at least one parent who had abused drugs or alcohol.
- 75% had been physically abused.
- 42% had been emotionally or physically neglected.
- 100% had been sexually abused.
- Violence in the home, parents who abused drugs or alcohol, physical , emotional and sexual abuse were all common factors in female juveniles who sexually abused.

- Manocha and Mezey (1998)
- Examined the backgrounds of 51 adolescents in a specialist residential treatment facility in Surrey for young people with sexually abusive behaviours.
- Of the 51 :
 - 49 were male
 - 2 were female
 - All aged 13 – 18 years
 - (mean age 15.4 years)
 - 80.4% in full time education
 - At time of referral 72.5% living at home with a parent
 - but, discontinuity of care experienced by 45.1%
 - 37.3% history of contact with mental health services, prior to onset of sexually abusive behaviour – mostly for childhood behavioural problems
 - 33% described as poor academic achievers
 - 19.6% diagnosed with a learning disability
 - 31.4% statemented – mostly for learning and behavioural difficulties
 - 21.6% had been subject to school exclusions
 - 13.7% truancy
 - 17.6% reported being bullied at school

Taylor (2003), study looked at the backgrounds and family circumstances of 277 children and young people accused of having sexually abused a child in a city in the UK over a six year period (not restricted to those receiving a specialist service).

- 92% were male
- When they were first reported for sexually harmful behaviours, they were aged 4-16 years (mean age 11.5 years).
- Those aged 10 or under were responsible for 34% of all the reported incidents.
- 70% had at least one “marked” school problem.
- 36% involved in sexually abusive behaviour had been “statemented”.
- 44% had been referred for professional help before the age of 10 years.

Victims

Summary

In our sample figures, the **majority of the victims were known to the perpetrator's** and only 2 victims were strangers (perpetrators, boys). Both stranger victims were adults. The majority of the **victims were other children and young people.**

Comparative Historical Factors, Boys and Girls.

66% of the girls and 41% of the boys had been victims of sexual abuse.

83% of the girls and 37.5% of the boys had been victims of emotional abuse.

50% of girls and 25% of boys had been victims of physical abuse.

83% of girls and 46% of boys had witnessed domestic violence.

100% of girls and 91% of boys had experienced discontinuity of care.

100% of girls and 50% of boys had previous contact with Social Services.

0% girls and 42% of boys had a statement of special educational needs.

None had previous convictions for sexual offences.

Fire Setting

Girls 0

Boys 1

History of Violent Behaviour

Girls 0

Boys 3