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## Background

In this form of abuse, a family member involves a child in sexual behaviours or activities. The perpetrator may not be a blood relative, but could be someone who is considered "part of the family". Crown Prosecution Service Guidelines (2013) on the Sexual Offences Act 2003, state: "These offences reflect the modern family unit and take account of situations where someone is living within the same household as a child and assuming a position of trust or authority over that child, as well as relationships defined by blood ties, adoption, fostering, marriage or living together as partners".

**2**

## Why it matters

In recent research on the prevalence of child sexual abuse, 11.3% of 18-24 year olds reported that they had been a victim of contact sexual abuse in childhood. If applied to the population of children in England, this prevalence rate suggests that 1.3 million children living in England today will have been sexually abused by the age of 18. A report by the Children's Commissioner in 2015 estimated, that child sexual abuse in the family environment comprises around **two thirds** of all child sexual abuse.

**3**

## Information

Research demonstrates that many victims do not recognise that they are being sexually abused and may not disclose the abuse until much later in life. This is particularly likely for younger children, where perpetrators normalise the experience of sexual abuse. The majority of known victims are female. A significant number of cases of sexual abuse in and around the family involve young people as the perpetrator - in itself, a possible indicator of experiences of sexual abuse.

**4**

Children from some BME groups, & children with disabilities or learning difficulties may face additional barriers to disclosure. Many victims are abused by several perpetrators, and in many cases, perpetrators will be known to each other. For many victims abuse leads to problems with mental and physical health, relationships and behaviour in general.

**5**

The disclosure or discovery of sexual abuse within a family is likely to have an enormous impact on the victim and their relationship with other family members, and this reaction may mitigate or exacerbate the impact on the victim. Legal processes risk re-traumatising victims, both pre-and post-trial. Issues include children not receiving court familiarisation visits, long delays in waiting for trial, low use of special measures to help children give best evidence, aggressive cross examination techniques.

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## What to do

### Further Reading

- [Lancashire Sexual Abuse in the Family Environment Procedures](#)
- [Centre of Expertise on Child Sexual Abuse resources](#)
- [Making Noise: Children's Voices for positive change after sexual abuse](#)
- [Victim and Survivor Voices from the Truth project](#)
- [Share Some Secrets Resource](#)

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## Questions to consider

- Am I prepared to think the unthinkable?
- How can we facilitate disclosure?
- Has the risk of sexual abuse in the family environment been considered where there are concerns about abuse and neglect?

