

The impacts of child sexual abuse:

A rapid evidence assessment

Key research findings

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Presentation structure

- Aims and approach
- Challenges identifying the impacts of child sexual abuse (CSA)
- Findings:
 - Impacts of CSA on victims and survivors
 - Resilience and recovery
 - Impacts of CSA on families of victims and survivors
 - Impacts of CSA on wider society
- Summary


Aims, approach and challenges

Aims

To summarise the existing evidence base on the impacts of CSA on:



**Victims
and
survivors**



**Victims
and
survivors'
families**



**Wider
society**

To identify gaps in the evidence base

Approach

- Rapid evidence assessment method (REA) - synthesis of existing evidence
- Peer-reviewed journal databases and grey literature
- Inclusion criteria - publications since 2006 which specifically focus on CSA. Included research on various types of CSA, and international studies.
- **205** studies analysed and quality assessed. Some additional contextual literature also included.
- Advice and input sought from the Inquiry's expert reference groups
- Final report peer reviewed by two academics

The impacts of CSA are difficult to identify for a number of reasons:

1. An outcome might be associated with CSA, but this does not necessarily mean it was *caused* by it
2. Isolating the impact of CSA from the impact of other types of maltreatment is challenging
3. Studies define and measure both CSA and the outcomes of CSA in different ways

Impacts on victims and survivors

“The effects of what happened have stayed with me, un-dealt with and unprocessed, throughout my life. The damage from my early years has coloured everything else at all stages of my life.”

One in Four (2015) Survivors’ Voices: Breaking the silence on living with the impacts of child sexual abuse in the family environment

Impacts on victims and survivors

Impacts can be:

- Significant and wide-ranging
- Enduring over victims and survivors' life-course
- Complex and interacting

Victims and survivors constitute a diverse group. Adverse impacts **vary significantly** between groups - and between individual - victims and survivors

Impacts on victims and survivors

The evidence suggests that victims and survivors are at ***increased risk of adverse*** outcomes in the following areas:

Physical health

Emotional wellbeing and mental health

Externalising behaviours

Interpersonal relationships

Socio-economic outcomes

Religious and spiritual belief

Vulnerability to revictimisation

Impacts on victims and survivors



Emotional wellbeing and mental health

Depression
**twice as
likely** in
young adults/
females

**Three
quarters
(73%)** CSE
survivors had
PTSD

Suicide
attempts **six
times** more
likely

- Victims and survivors are at increased risk of a range of emotional difficulties and mental health conditions
- Emotional difficulties associated with CSA include distress, anger, fear and low self-esteem
- Mental health conditions associated with CSA include post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and complex trauma, anxiety, depression, self-harm, suicide attempts, dissociation, postnatal depression

Interpersonal relationships

Only 17%
had a secure
attachment
style

**Three
quarters
females
(75%)** sexual
functioning
problems

Depression
can
compound
parenting
challenges

- CSA can have a profound effect on a victim and survivor's ability to form and/or maintain positive relationships
- Victims and survivors are at increased risk of poor relationship satisfaction and issues with sexual intimacy
- Impacts on parent-child relationships include overprotective parenting and a lack of confidence in own parenting capability
- Health and behavioural impacts of CSA also have a knock-on effect on relationships

Socio-economic outcomes

Lower
educational
attainment

Lower
employment
rates

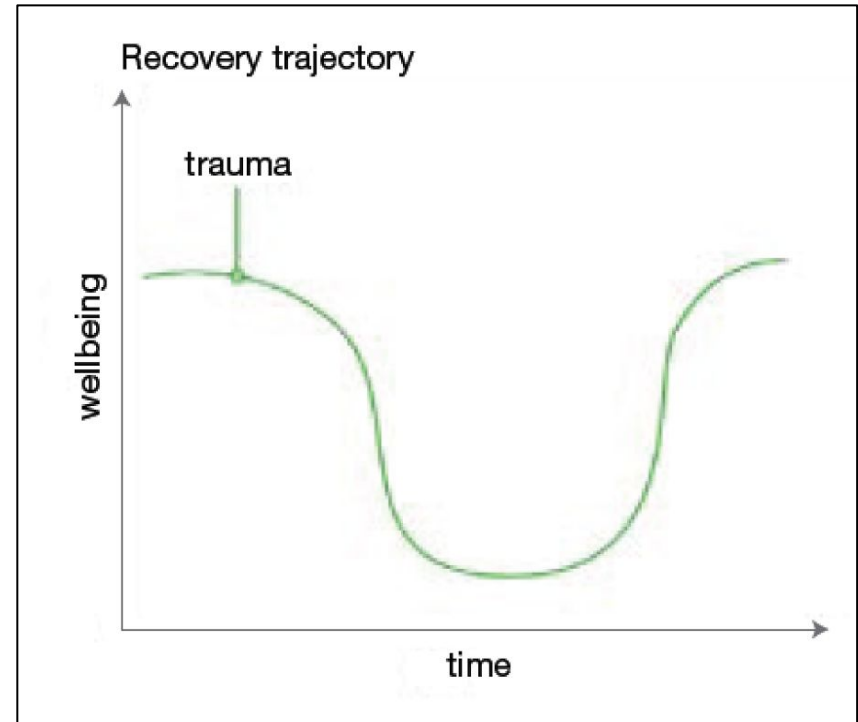
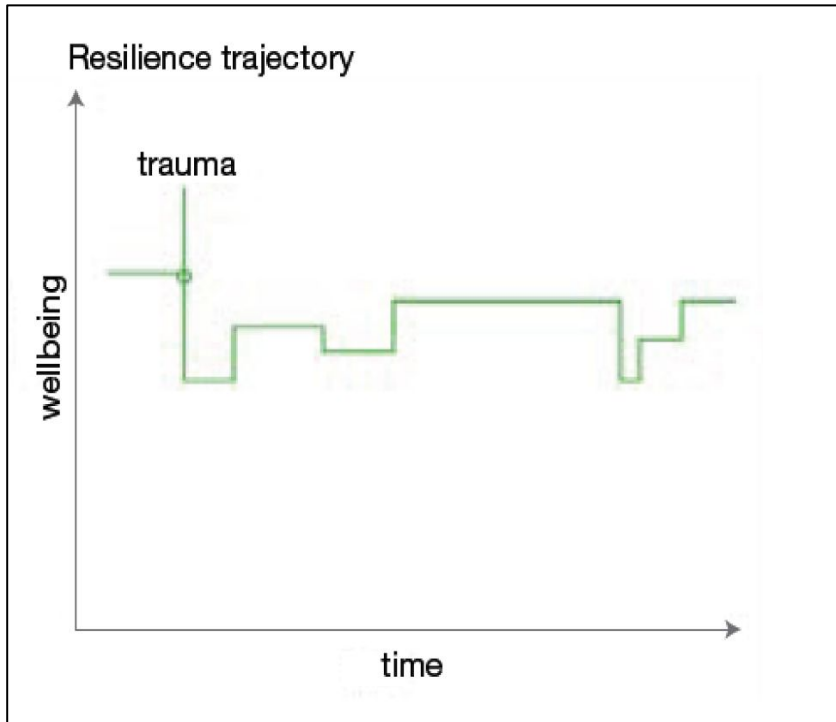
Financial and
housing
instability

- There is evidence of an enduring association between CSA and reduced life chances throughout the life course
- Barriers to stable employment include low literacy and physical and mental health problems
- High attainment or 'overwork' can be a coping strategy for some victims and survivors

Resilience and recovery

Resilience and recovery

Adverse outcomes following CSA are not inevitable. Some victims and survivors show resilience and/or recovery



Risk and protective factors

Individual factors

Changes in brain structure and function
Coping strategies
Spirituality, faith and belief
General attitudes and attributes

Context and characteristics of the CSA

The nature of the CSA
Polyvictimisation

Interpersonal and familial factors

Parental caregiver/support
Response to disclosure (by parent/caregiver)
Partner and peer support

Wider social and environmental factors

Educational engagement and attainment
Professional support and therapy
Seeking criminal or civil redress

Impacts on families of victims and survivors

Impacts on family members

PTSD
persisted for
at least 4
years after
child's
disclosure

Increased use
of health
services and
anti-
depressants

Siblings
also affected

- Impacts on non-offending family members can be similarly wide-ranging:
 - Trauma and emotional distress
 - Family breakdown and social isolation
 - Employment, housing and finances destabilised
- Impacts can persist over the longer-term
- Impacts especially pronounced in cases of intra-familial CSA and where non-offending parent/caregiver is also a victim and survivor

Impacts on wider society

Impacts on wider society

- Mainly explored in financial terms
- Analysis puts the cost of CSA in the UK at an estimated **£3.2 billion** annually in 12/13 prices

Cost type	Cost (12/13 prices)
Health	£182 million
Criminal Justice System	£149 million
Services for Children	£124 million
Labour market	£2.7 billion
Total costs to the Exchequer	£424 million
Total costs	£3.2 billion

Summary

Summary

- The trauma of CSA can lead to **significant, wide-ranging, and life-long** adverse consequences.
- Impacts are not just experienced by victims and survivors. CSA has **profound ripple effects** for family members and wider society.
- Enduring adverse impacts of CSA are **not inevitable**. Resilience and recovery are possible. The provision of **effective and timely support services for children and adults** are an important protective factor.

“My road to recovery began and I managed to tell a friend. To me this was a huge risk, which it seemed could almost be fatal. I then had the fortune to find a therapist (which seemed an even bigger risk) who had the amazing skill and patience, kindness and care to reach me and help me see the truth of the situation, so I could begin to actually value and love myself. This is something that had seemed impossible.”

One in Four (2015) *Survivors’ Voices: Breaking the silence on living with the impacts of child sexual abuse in the family environment*