



Reporting child sexual abuse to the police

If you have been a victim of child sexual abuse, you may not yet have reported what happened to you. There may be a number of reasons for this, and to take this step may be painful for you and require courage. You may, or may not, be ready to take this step now. If you feel you can, it may help to speak to a trusted friend or family member.

There are a number of routes you can take to report child sexual abuse, including:

- Telephoning the FA/NSPCC helpline 0800 023 2642
- The Professional Footballers' Association – wellbeing@thepfa.co.uk
- Going to a police station
- Dialling 101
- Reporting online via your local police force website
- Contacting the FA directly via safeguarding@thefa.com
- Through a third party, such as a friend or relative, reporting in one of the ways above

Whichever route you choose to report through, you will be listened to and believed. Any report made through any of the channels will be sent to the relevant police force to investigate based on what you have spoken about. It will also be shared with Operation Hydrant, the national policing team set up to coordinate the investigation of non-recent child sexual abuse.

You can also choose to report abuse anonymously via crimestoppers; either telephoning 0800 555 111 or using the online form at www.crimestoppers-uk.org.

Why should I report what happened to me?

Many victims and survivors of child sexual abuse have said that simply telling someone about what happened to them, being listened to and believed, was a relief – even though the act of doing that can be painful and upsetting.

If the person you name in your account is alive, the police will consider whether there are safeguarding issues that need to be addressed and if there are, the police will work with The FA to see if they are currently involved in football and take action accordingly. Many child sexual abusers continue to abuse, often into older age. Reporting what happened to you can help to protect other potential victims, whether or not there is a criminal trial.

News of an investigation or arrest will often result in other victims and survivors coming forward. For the survivor of child sexual abuse it may be a huge relief to know that you are not alone.

Not every report to the police will result in a criminal trial. However, every week across the country it is a fact that people who have abused children are sent to jail by the courts. Many victims and survivors attend court to see the person who abused them sentenced and held publicly to account for what they did.

What will happen when my details are given to police from the FA/NSPCC?

The local police force will then make contact with you. This could be in a matter of days or weeks, depending on the force. If you are finding it difficult whilst you're waiting for police to make contact, it may be worth seeking support from a helpline. Forces currently have a large

number of people to speak to and they understand that this is a difficult time. And, they must ensure that this process is not rushed, is carried out sensitively and that all due care and attention is taken. You can request how you would prefer to be contacted, and this will be passed on. However, there may be occasions when the local police force may contact you in a different way. This might be because they are unable to contact you through your preferred method, or they may need to speak to you more urgently due to a safeguarding issue. You can request to speak to a male or a female police officer.

First account

The police will ask you to provide a 'first account' – they will ask you questions so that they can understand what happened to you. This might be over the phone, or an officer may come to speak to you at a time and place convenient for you. After this, you will be asked to provide a more detailed account to the police – this can be done through a range of ways, from a written statement to a video interview, however is best for you. This more detailed account could be used as formal evidence if there is a criminal trial. Some people provide a first account but choose not to go further – the information they have provided is unlikely to be used in court, but will be used as 'intelligence' - this means it can be used by the police.

Will I have to go to a police station?

The police will come and speak to you in an environment you are comfortable in, whether it is your home, a police station or a neutral location.

After providing your first account

When you have provided your account to the police, they will launch an investigation, which will seek to uncover any evidence relating to the allegations you have made. At the appropriate time, police will approach the person you have accused of abuse. The police will refer to the person you are accusing as "the suspect".

Depending on the length of time since the offence(s) took place, the current status of the suspect, and your safety, the police will decide whether to arrest the suspect, or interview them "under invite". The police need to meet strict criteria before they can arrest someone, therefore they may decide that "under invite" is more appropriate. However, this does not mean that they are treating the offence less seriously. The police will ask for your view on this and take it into consideration.

Who will know that I have reported the abuse?

The suspect: Only at the point of arrest is the suspect informed by police of the allegations made against them and who has made the allegations. There is no reason to do so prior to the point of arrest. As a victim, only your name, or the name the suspect is reasonably expected to know you by, will be given to the suspect when arrested. This is information which is necessary in order to give the suspect opportunity to answer the allegations.

Your personal details are guarded at all times. It is normal practice to assess the risks to all victims right from initial contact and this is maintained and reevaluated continuously throughout the process to manage any risks identified.

General public: A victim's identity is never released to the general public by the police. A victim has a right in law to remain anonymous throughout and after the process. It is completely up to a victim to waive their right to anonymity to family, friends or the public. A victim's family or the public will not be aware unless a victim waives their right to anonymity or self discloses. However, family members or friends may be made aware of the victim identity if they are a

witness in the case. A suspect cannot legally release the name of the complainant after the point of the arrest, when they have been made aware of the allegations.

Outside the police: Any information shared outside of the police to partner organisations such as the local authority or the NHS, will only be if absolutely necessary for your own protection and welfare. As a victim, you will be told if this needs to happen. It is up to a victim to disclose information to organisations such as charities or support helplines.

Support

The officer who is assigned to your case will make contact with you as soon as possible. They are known as the “officer in the case” or OIC. The OIC will give you help, support and address any specific needs or wishes you have. They can also make referrals on your behalf to other agencies who are independent of the police who may be able to support you and meet your needs. There are many groups who provide support – your OIC will be able to provide you with information regarding what is available in your area. This might include your local Independent Sexual Violence Advisor Services (ISVA). ISVAs can provide practical support to victims and survivors of rape, sexual abuse, and sexual assault.

You may also want to receive therapy or counselling to help with dealing with the abuse. This may be accessible via your GP, the FA and police can signpost to services which can offer support.

The police officer dealing with your case can explain CPS guidance in relation to how pre-trial therapy and counselling should be managed before a criminal trial takes place.

The Investigation

The pathway of investigations will vary, depending on the practice of the local force and the specific details of your case. Once the suspect has been interviewed, all of the witnesses or people with relevant information spoken to, and all the evidence collected, the investigation will be complete.

A decision will be made regarding whether there is sufficient evidence to charge. This is made by either the police or the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) dependent on the particulars of the case. If the decision taken is not to proceed to charge the suspect, the reasons for this will be explained to you by the officer in the case, and you will have the chance to ask questions and understand why. If you disagree with the decision that no further action should be taken against the suspect, you may challenge this decision via the Victims Right to Review Scheme. This gives you the right, under certain circumstances, to have the decision not to charge or prosecute a suspect reviewed.

The Trial

If the police investigation results in charges, the case will proceed to court.

How long will a trial take?

How long a trial will take can depend on a number of things, but may include the number of crimes the accused is charged with, and the number of victims and witnesses giving evidence. Trials can range from a few days to several weeks.

Will I be identified?

It is against the law for newspapers or television to use your name or any details that would identify you. All sexual offence victims have an absolute right to anonymity by law, regardless of

whether a suspect is charged, and found guilty or not guilty. This means that while the news media may report on the criminal trial, and the evidence which is heard, they will not say or report anything which could lead to you being identified. If you choose to waive your right to anonymity, your OIC can discuss what this might mean for you.

Frequently Asked Questions

What if the person who abused me is dead?

Although a deceased person cannot be subject to a criminal trial, you should still consider reporting what happened to the police. This allows the police to check whether the person you are accusing was linked to any other abusers who may still pose a risk to children. You will also have the opportunity to receive the same support offered to victims and survivors where the accused is alive.

I reported the offences against me previously but nothing was done – why should I bother?

The police service, other agencies, and society have recognised that victims and survivors were not always listened to and believed in the past. The police service has worked hard to change its approach, and to earn the trust of victims and survivors to come forward and report non-recent child sexual abuse. The fact that so many victims and survivors have come forward in recent years is partly as a result of that change in approach. The police service will listen and you will be believed when you report the circumstances of abuse and an impartial investigation will be launched.

What happened to me was so long ago – will I be believed if I come forward now?

The police service understands the importance of listening to, and believing, victims and survivors when they find the courage to come forward and report offences. National policy and guidance says that officers must believe the victim when they provide their account, and then launch an investigation. The police service also understands the many reasons why a victim or survivor of child sexual abuse may not report what happened to them until they are an adult – this will in no way detract from what you have to say.

Will Operation Hydrant investigate my allegations?

Operation Hydrant is the national policing operation which coordinates all investigations of non-recent child sexual abuse for the whole country. It does not undertake the investigations which may follow from your allegation. This is done by the force local to where the abuse took place. Operation Hydrant will pass the details provided to the local force.

Criminal Injuries Compensation

[The Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme](#) is a government funded scheme designed to compensate blameless victims of violent crime in Great Britain. The scheme can compensate blameless victims of violent crime or people whose loved ones have died as a result of violent crime, but to be eligible it requires all incidents to be reported to the police. If the crime for which you are seeking compensation has not been reported to the police the scheme cannot make a payment.

This factsheet has been endorsed by victims and survivors.