

# Child Sexual Abuse Medical Examinations

## A trauma informed approach

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# The tip of the iceberg...

Far more children are sexually abused than statutory services identify in Somerset

Child sexual abuse: Data Insights Hub  
csacentre.org.uk

≤5 children placed on a child protection plan due to sexual abuse

241 children assessed at risk of sexual abuse\*

N/A child sexual abuse offences recorded by the police

4,880

children estimated to be sexually abused every year\*\*

Sources: Home Office, Police recorded crime and outcomes, 2023/24; Department for Education, Characteristics of Children in Need, 2023/24. \*Includes assessments regarding concerns of child sexual abuse and exploitation. \*\*Estimate calculated using single-year prevalence estimates by age group (Radford et al. 2011, Childhood abuse and neglect in the UK today) and the Office for National Statistics mid-year population estimates, 2023. Scale figure rounded to nearest 10.

# 500,000

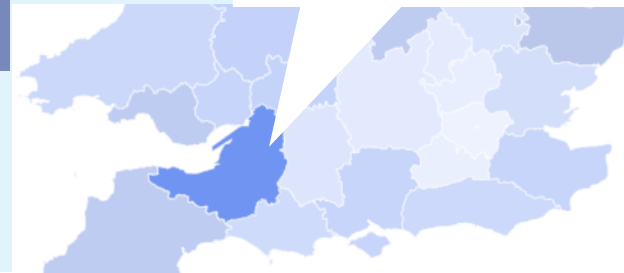
children are estimated to be sexually abused every year in England and Wales  
CSA centre

Avon and Somerset  
Police Force Area  
22/23 CSA offences  
reported

700

Number of children seen for CSA medical at The  
Bridge 22/23

52



# How should Health be responding...

Belief

Quality

Compassion

Research shows that your immediate response when someone discloses to you that they have been raped or sexually assaulted can have a powerful effect on their later recovery (Ullman, 2010).

Access

Preparation

Experience

# What a FME/CSA medical is..... and what it isn't

## Benefits (what it is):

- Evidential (forensics, injury documentation and impact on child)
- Identification of other types of abuse
- Unmet health needs
- Intimate examination is a small part of the assessment
- Can be viewed as a reassurance exam
- Can be offered without police involvement

## Myths (what it isn't):

- Compulsory
- Intrusive or traumatic
- Always an “internal”
- Harmful or Painful
- Parent is not with child
- Proof of sexual assault
- Virginity testing

**Holistic assessment of all the child's needs at a time when they are vulnerable**

# What is offered in an FME/CSA medical?



“The swab is not the job”

# Trauma informed & hopeful

- Feel **safe** in that space at that time (calm environment, right people)
- Trust & honesty
- Empowering - enable **choice** and **control** no matter how small
- Cultural and contextual consideration
- **Non-traumatic** – no repeat questioning, develop shared language
- Allow them to be heard and take it at their pace
- Individual – **judgement free** and seeing the whole person
- Circles of **support** - non-abusing parents and carers, siblings, peers



'Nothing about me, without me'

Your interaction might be profound in that moment

Candice Harris

# The health pathway for sexual assault and sexual abuse in Somerset



- Telephone on 0117 342 6999 (**24/7**) to speak to a paediatrician for advice and in cases of sexual assault **less than 7** days ago
- Email strategy meeting invites to [TheBridge@UHBW.nhs.uk](mailto:TheBridge@UHBW.nhs.uk) (checked daily)
- Complete the **referral form** on our website in cases of non-recent CSA: please ensure you have the young persons/parent/carers consent  
[Referrals - The Bridge – The Bridge](#)
- Once The Bridge receives the referral, we will contact with the referrer and/or the carer/young person to discuss the support we can offer and arrange.
- Contact our dedicated team for non-recent sexual abuse (**8 days or more** after the incident) [Avon River Clinic – The Bridge](#)