

Lucy Faithfull Foundation's vision is of a society where children are free from sexual abuse and exploitation. Its mission is to prevent abuse from happening by working with those perpetrating and affected by it, in partnership with the public and voluntary/statutory sector organisations.

Across the globe, countries are at different stages in recognising and responding to child sexual abuse. The Foundation is embarking on a major project to develop a toolkit that will assist a nation looking to tackle child sexual abuse to develop a considered and credible strategy for the prevention of such abuse. This work is supported by Oak Foundation.

Child sexual abuse (CSA) is estimated to impact more than one in ten children worldwide. The cost to the individuals, their families and communities is immense. Over the past 30 years the more developed and high income nations (e.g. in North America, Western Europe) have developed a range of responses, typically involving criminal justice responses to perpetrators and health and social care services for victims. More recent developments in prevention have seen school-based programmes for children, public education for parents and carers as well as programmes to prompt attitude and behaviour change in men and boys.

Whilst a great deal is now understood about some aspects of CSA, other aspects are still emerging, for example abuse via the Internet. We now have some good evidence about effective tertiary interventions with some perpetrators, some victims and some families; as well as about some primary prevention endeavours.

However, it is not clear whether such interventions would be as effective if applied in other nations or regions, due to cultural, contextual and other differences. Interventions have also, typically, developed piece-meal, without an analysis of the complex nature of the problem of CSA and differences, for example, in perpetrators and victims (age, gender, relationship, history of abuse etc).

The sharing of promising or effective practice between nations is laudable, but the application of one nation's "solution" in a different country - in the absence of an analysis of the utility of that "solution" to the different types and circumstances of abuse in that country - can lead to poor policy and practice that fails to tackle the problem of CSA. Each nation needs the confidence and knowledge to develop and deploy responses suited to its own circumstances rather than to simply implement solutions created elsewhere.

The prevention of CSA, to be most effective, also requires clarity about the nature, context and dynamics of the different types of abuse – for example, the prevention of abuse by a stranger typically requires a different approach from that required to prevent abuse within the family.

Lucy Faithfull Foundation, August 2013

The Lucy Faithfull Foundation's 'Eradicating Child Sexual Abuse' (ECSA) project will draw on the expertise of practitioners and academics responding to child sexual abuse around the world to help develop the toolkit for people of all nations to use when looking to address child sexual abuse.

We will run an online forum, convene meetings and host conferences with a view to:

1. Creating a comprehensive list of different 'types' of child sexual abuse with definitions
2. Creating a representative list of brief, accessible summaries of effective or promising primary, secondary and tertiary prevention responses to child sexual abuse
3. Creating and trialling a step-by-step process for the design of a comprehensive strategy for the prevention of child sexual abuse by a nation/area/region
4. Disseminating the prevention toolkit to organisations across the globe.

Across all our activities we will be using the 'Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Framework' developed by Prof Stephen Smallbone et al. (1)

Your input and participation in debates, discussions and online forums will be invaluable to this project.

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(1) Smallbone et al (2008) Preventing Child Sexual Abuse: Evidence, Policy and Practice.