

Sexual offences against children up by a third



The number of sexual offences against children aged under 13 in Scotland has risen by a third in a year, according to NSPCC research.

In 2014-15 there were 746 serious attacks including rapes, sexual assaults and sexual activity with children under the age of 13. This compared with 562 sexual attacks in 2013-14 – an increase of 33 per cent – and 551 in 2012-13.

The statistics, published today in the NSPCC's annual How Safe are our Children? report shows that in 2014-15 there were 160 cases of the rape or attempted rape of a child aged under 13 compared with 97 in 2013-14. There were 394 cases of sexual assault – up from 349 in 2013-14. The amount of offences for sexual activity with a child under 13 in 2014-15 also saw an increase with 192 cases reported compared with 116 in the previous year.

Police recorded 47,008 sexual offences against children aged under 18 throughout the UK in 2014-2015. England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland all saw an increase in the number of recorded sexual offences against children in the past year to mean that 2014-2015 saw the highest number of recorded sexual offences against children of any year in the last decade.

Matt Forde, National Head for NSPCC Scotland said: "The exact reasons behind the recorded increase in offences merit further investigation but what we know for sure is that behind these statistics are hundreds of children who have been the subject of sexual assault and many more who have been assaulted but who have not come forward to report attacks.

“All too often children who have been abused develop chronic mental health problems, become suicidal or self-harm before therapeutic services become available to them.”

Research from the NSPCC shows that sexual offences against younger children are at historically high levels and the charity is calling for those affected to be prioritised within child and adult mental health services.

Matt Forde added: “Protecting children needs a system built on strong services. These services must recognise that a child’s wellbeing relies on the quality of care-giving relationships from the earliest days, that supports the development of secure attachment and provides the building blocks for healthy relationships throughout infancy, childhood and adolescence.

“We need to tackle the causes and consequences of child abuse. This requires an approach which prevents abuse, identifies risk early, and supports recovery.”

The NSPCC is running a campaign – *It’s Time*– which is calling for all child victims of abuse to be given timely, appropriate therapy to help them overcome their traumatic experience and rebuild their lives.