

*People don't like talking about sexual violence, and when they do, they say a lot of things that aren't true. There are a lot of 'myths' that have developed because of this, which often protect abusers and blame survivors. This sheet aims to challenge some of the common myths around childhood sexual abuse and support you to remember that you are not to blame for what happened to you.*

MYTH	TRUTH
Children are sexual beings and want to be touched in a sexual way	Sexual feelings are not understood by young children. Whilst they experience 'nice' feelings when they are touched gently, they do not recognise touching that is sexual.
Abuse is most often committed by strangers	The danger to children is mostly from people close to them, people they should be able to trust.
Boys who are abused will become abusers when they grow up	This is a myth spread by abusers who are looking for an excuse for their behaviour. It is not true
If a child doesn't scream or tell anyone, it means they are encouraging the abuse	Abusers go to great lengths to ensure secrecy from children. This is called grooming, and is often done by befriending children, giving them treats, and telling them how special they are. Abusers may also use threats and intimidation It can be very confusing for children who then believe that they caused the abuse.
Children don't remember what happened to them when they were younger and so it doesn't affect them	People may not remember every single detail of their abuse but they will often clearly remember the fear and dread they felt around that person. 'Triggers' reminding them of a certain event when they were children can prompt flashbacks which feel as if the abuse is happening now.
Children hate their abusers	When the abuser is someone they know, it is very confusing for a child who yearns for closeness but hates the sexual acts being perpetrated upon them.
Children who are abused are damaged forever	Children have to be very strong to have survived sexual abuse and with the right specialist help they can live happy and contented lives.
Parents or carers should have known their children were being abused.	Perpetrators have had a lot of practice at deceiving and grooming adults into believing that they are 'nice' guys. This is very confusing for abused children who cannot understand that their parents are friendly with the abuser, leaving them feeling they will not be believed.
It is the fault of young girls who look much older than their age and encourage older men to abuse them.	No-one would ever look to be abused! It is never the fault of young people or children that they are abused. Again this is a myth perpetuated by abusers who don't want to go to prison!