

## **Communication key to getting children to disclose abuse**

---

By Claire O'Sullivan - Thursday, November 08, 2012

Children are more likely to disclose sexual abuse if they are regularly asked by adults about what is going on in their lives.

Friendships with people of their own age where personal problems are discussed will also make it easier for an abuse victim to open up, according to the latest research. This data comes just days after it was revealed that survivors of child sexual abuse wait on average 25 years before accessing support services, compared to an average wait of five years for survivors of adult sexual violence.

Last year, 53% of female Rape Crisis Centre users said they were abused as children compared to 84% of males.

This latest research on what helps children to open up about abuse will be presented by Dr Rosaleen McElvaney to the Psychological Society of Ireland annual conference in Cork later this week.

Internationally, it is believed that only one third of children disclose sexual abuse in the month after it takes place. Previous research has shown that fear about the effects of disclosure on the family unit acts as a deterrent to admitting abuse.

Older children often do not want to reveal the abuse as they feel ashamed while many younger children do not understand what has taken place. Boys are also less likely to disclose abuse as children compared to girls.

Dr McElvaney said it was much harder to access research about child sexual abuse than it was about adult sexual abuse.

"At the conference, I will also be presenting research showing the huge amount of data around sexual abuse that we could use if we examined say 500 files of children that have gone through social services. We have found in smaller studies that there is a lot of valuable information there that could help us to create a report equal in value to the 2002 landmark Sexual Assault and Violence in Ireland report, which examined the prevalence of adult sexual abuse," she said.















