

# We are Visible!

The Voice of adults who have experienced Childhood Sexual Abuse:  
The Voice of the Visible Reference Group

**Welcome to the 1st issue of [We are Visible](#)** - This newsletter brings you information and news relating to the work of Visible. To contact the group please email [visiblevoice@leedsinvolvement.org.uk](mailto:visiblevoice@leedsinvolvement.org.uk)

## Visible – Who, What and Why?

### WHO

Key professionals from organisations in Leeds joining forces with those adults who have experienced child sexual abuse

### WHAT

A group that advocates best practice, successes, and learning. Through sharing the experiences of those who have experienced child sexual abuse

### WHY

Visible want to improve the health and wellbeing outcomes of adults who have experienced child sexual abuse

## Spotlight on .....



If you're an adult who experienced abuse as a child. You may not have felt able to talk to someone about what happened. Or, you may have tried and not felt heard. **You are not alone.**

What happened to you as a child, may have had a deep and possibly devastating effect on your well-being (physical and psychological). As an adult, you may have experienced anxiety, anger, low moods, feelings of guilt and shame. You may also have had problems with relationships, difficulty trusting other people or behaved in ways which put yourself at risk or danger. It's important to understand that this is likely to be linked with the abuse. Remember all abuse is wrong and it is **never** the child's (or young person's) fault.

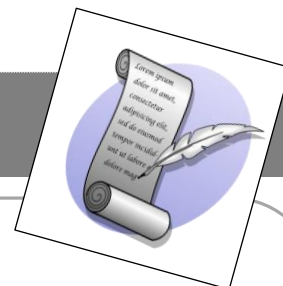
Whatever the difficulties that you are experiencing now, there is help and support available in Leeds and **you are not alone**. There are people who will believe what you have to say and who want to support you. Go to the [Mindwell](#) website and check out a range of support options you may feel helpful.

**50,000**   
**LEEDS ADULTS**  
are estimated to be living with the impact of  
**child sexual abuse**

A way to have a voice and be heard is via [The Truth Project!](#) . This is an Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse. It offers an opportunity for people to come forward, share their experiences in a safe and confidential way. Which the inquiry then use to better understand the scale, breadth and nature of child sexual abuse, in an effort to help it stop happening in the future, shape child protection procedures and policies.

Many have already taken part in the Truth Project. From Visible 2 people have attended. [Click](#) to hear about their experiences.

# Survivor Stories



## Life in Lockdown

The current pandemic has brought up many mixed feelings and emotions as a survivor, many have been unexpected and have taken a while to work out. Feelings about the pandemic, the lockdown and global suffering have brought up are those of helplessness, fear and the sense of being trapped. These are many very common emotions that were present during child sexual abuse & life after. At the moment we are under attack by the virus. This is of course is triggering and feels threatening, just like the abuse.

There's a huge sense of constant anticipation, when will this end? Will it directly affect me? What will happen afterwards? I know for myself I struggle with uncertainty and not having answers, I guess having answers helps me feel I have an escape or an opportunity for 'freedom.' Many survivors rely on planning their days to reduce anxiety, we look and try to predict the future so we can try keep ourselves safe and at the moment we can't do that or its severely disrupted. Change at the best of times is very difficult, but now everything has changed and hard to find the balance again.

Living on high alert is normal for survivors, it's a way we feel we can cope, feeling in control, to potentially seek out threats. This heightened way of living is exhausting. Survivors often feel pain, fatigue and physical symptoms from the physiological pressure of constantly living on high alert. Now the world is on high alert and everyone around us, every person or who we see in the media is on high alert too. Survivors now have the added pressure of the world's high alert, alongside their own and it's absolutely draining.

You don't have to 'be' a certain way during this pandemic. You may also feel pressured to make this time 'worthwhile'... That's great, but also it's okay to just survive, just to get through it in any way you can. No feeling is wrong, selfish or unworthy. Don't be hard on yourself too you're doing the best you can... In the circumstances we have .....

[Check out the Visible website to read how the pandemic is effecting others](#)

There is a lot of stuff about "talking" being helpful but someone has to listen to what is being said to make it beneficial

It wasn't until I started therapy that I understood the issues I had as an adult stemmed from what happened to me as a child

I might struggle to describe what actually happened as I am still seeing it through the eyes of a child.

## Visible comprises two groups working together

### Visible Reference Group

The Visible Reference Group “We are Visible” are a group of adults that have experienced Child Sexual Abuse. “We are Visible” are the service user representatives that attend every Steering Group Meeting to provide feedback and information to improve services for people that have experienced Child Sexual Abuse. So far the group has co-designed the Visible website, Mindwell Leeds the element regarding Child Sexual Abuse, A Policy statement on the principles for helping adult victims of child sexual abuse, inputted support and advice about training for Leeds and York Partnership Foundation Trust staff. The group has also shared their stories in an Observer Article and their experiences of The Truth Project.

### Visible Steering Group

The Steering Group is made up of key people in the city from: Leeds City Council, Leeds York Partnership Foundation, Leeds Teaching Hospital Trust, Leeds Clinical Commissioning Group, Police and Commissioner, Leeds Community Healthcare as well as BASIS, Women’s Counselling and Therapy Service, Forward Leeds, Leeds Survivor Led Crisis Service.

To visit the Visible website click [here](#)

## Support for all survivors

[West Yorkshire Victim Support](#) is open weekdays (8am-8pm) if you need someone about any crime that you have experienced (including childhood abuse), call 0300 303 1971. It doesn't matter whether you have reported the crime or how long ago it took place.

The [Victim Support national helpline](#) is open through the night (8pm-8am) and all weekend - call 0808 16 89 111 (freephone).

[Survivors West Yorkshire](#) provides support both to [men](#) and [women](#) in West Yorkshire who have been affected by sexual violence.

[Napac](#) is a national freephone support line for adults who have experienced any type of abuse in childhood. Call 0808 8010331, 10am-9pm Monday to Thursday and 10am-6pm on Fridays.

[Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Centre \(RASASC\)](#) is a national freephone helpline which supports any man or woman who has experienced rape or sexual abuse (or their supporters). Call 0800 0288022 7.30-9.3

