



What is Technology-Assisted Child Sexual Abuse?

Technology-Assisted Child Sexual Abuse (TACSA) happens when a child under the age of 18 is harmed by someone who has used technology to enable sexual abuse. It can take place in many different forms and it impacts children and young people from across the globe regardless of their religious, ethnic and cultural background, sexuality, gender, disability status or social class. According to research by **WeProtect Global Alliance**, at least **300 million+ children per year** are subjected to sexual exploitation and abuse online.⁽¹⁾



⁽¹⁾ Stanfield, Paul. World's First Estimate of the Scale of Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, WeProtect Global Alliance, 27 May 2024, www.weprotect.org/blog/worlds-first-estimate-of-the-scale-of-online-child-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse/.



TACSA includes the below forms of harm, but this list is not exhaustive, and some experiences may not be outlined below:

- Grooming or sexual harassment via text messages, social media platforms, apps or gaming platforms. This can take place on devices including phones, laptops, tablets, smart watches, games consoles and VR headsets.
- Video or phone calls of a sexual nature
- Images or videos taken and shared with consent then shared or shown to another person without consent
- Sexual images and videos taken and shared through coercion, blackmail, manipulation, extortion or grooming
- Sexual or naked images or videos covertly taken without the victim's knowledge
- Financially motivated sexual extortion or exploitation also known as 'sextortion'
- Forced exposure to sexually explicit materials including pornography or child sexual abuse material
- Familial or 'contact' abuse where elements of technology have been used including the taking of images or videos
- Sexual images and videos created through the use of AI or 'nudifying' apps
- Masturbatory aids or 'sex toys' used to facilitate the abuse.

In short, the technology element of TACSA is not specific to online or social media platforms, it can also include any technology that has played a role in the harm the child or young person has experienced.



The abuser could be anyone.

They could include a family member, friend, peer, teacher or a sports, music, drama or religious leader. Offenders may also be unknown to the child or young person and use online platforms to gain their trust. This process is called grooming. Perpetrators of TACSA can be any gender and any age, including under the age of 18 or younger than the victim. Regardless of who perpetrated the abuse, the impact and harm caused to victims and survivors can be devastating, but with the right support, recovery is possible.



Many victims and survivors of TACSA feel shame, guilt and blame.

They may even feel unworthy of seeking help for the harm they have endured. This is often due to a social misconception that the harm caused through TACSA is 'less severe'. But there is no hierarchy of abuse and TACSA is just as harmful as other forms of child sexual abuse. No matter the type of abuse experienced, all victims and survivors deserve support to begin their recovery journey and live a life free from harm.



Victims and survivors may also be wrongly blamed for their abuse.

For example, some children and young people have reported being blamed for accepting friend requests, replying to messages or sending images. It is important to know that the offender is the only person responsible for causing the harm and a child should never have to carry the burden of their guilt.



Many people who have experienced TACSA have never told anyone about the abuse.

The Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse reported that up to **two-thirds** of children and young people do not disclose abuse during childhood, and many don't disclose even in adulthood.



Speaking about TACSA can be extremely difficult for victims and survivors.

There are many reasons why a person may feel unable to disclose including those mentioned above. However, it does not matter if the abuse happened days, months or decades ago, those who have experienced TACSA deserve specialist support to understand and overcome the impacts of the harm.

If you are reading this resource because you believe you may have experienced Technology-Assisted Child Sexual Abuse, you are not alone. Support is available and it may be helpful to know that there are many organisations who are working on behalf of children and young people, victims and survivors to prevent and support recovery from TACSA.

Find links to support services here: csacentre.org.uk/find-a-support-service/

You may find our other victim and survivor resources helpful: [Click here.](#)



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Funded by:



This project was made possible through the support of Oak Foundation.