# Norfolk report reveals children under five accused in hundreds of sexual offences



Recent revelations from Norfolk have stunned the public, as shocking data indicates that children as young as five have been accused of sexual assault and even rape. This alarming trend is highlighted in a report obtained through a Freedom of Information request conducted by the Eastern Daily Press, with Norfolk Constabulary documenting a troubling total of 444 offences involving school-age children since 2020. Disturbingly, 10 of these alleged perpetrators were under the age of five, primarily targeting young girls, who represented 70% of the victims. The detailed statistics illuminate a broader issue of rising sexual offences in schools, with 15% of reported incidents taking place in primary educational settings.

The context surrounding these figures is a growing concern across the UK regarding sexual misconduct among younger populations. Recent data shows that between September 2023 and September 2024, Norfolk Police recorded a total of 3,280 rape and sexual assault offences, with an alarming number of victims aged ten or under. Among the accused, 131 were primary school-aged children, revealing a stark escalation in harmful behaviours amongst youth, raising significant alarm within the community and among advocacy groups focused on child protection.

The rise in accusations involving such young children underscores the urgent need for comprehensive interventions and educational initiatives. Ciara Bergman, CEO of Rape Crisis England and Wales, emphasised that responses from schools often fall short, potentially re-traumatising victims instead of providing the necessary support. The charity has been vocal in urging the Education Secretary and the Safeguarding Minister to enhance guidance and training for educators to effectively address peer-on-peer abuse. Notably, the issue of inadequate training for teachers has become imperative, as many lack the skills to appropriately respond to disclosures of sexual violence among students.

Additional investigations also indicate a worrying national trend. In schools across the UK, reports of sexual offences have surged, nearly tripling from 2011-12 to the 2014-15 academic year. This pattern reflects broader societal issues, including the need for robust relationship education within school curricula to equip children with the tools to navigate complex social interactions safely.

In light of these findings, it is clear that there is an urgent requirement for systemic change. The Office for National Statistics highlights the challenge of addressing child sexual abuse, particularly regarding online offences, which are frequently under-reported. Given that often the perpetrators of abuse are known to the victim, fostering an environment of trust and support is crucial for early intervention.

Moreover, data from the Metropolitan Police further emphasises the need for awareness and action, with over 27,000 recorded rape and sexual offences nationwide in a recent period. This is a clarion call for targeted strategies to safeguard children and prevent both victimisation and perpetration from such young ages. Collectively, these statistics illustrate a burgeoning crisis that requires immediate attention from policymakers, educational institutions, and support organisations to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the most vulnerable in society.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/2060767/children-aged-five-and-under-accused-sexual-assault-uk), [[2]](https://www.lynnnews.co.uk/news/nearly-half-of-all-rape-and-sexual-assault-victims-in-norfol-9404638/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[2]](https://www.lynnnews.co.uk/news/nearly-half-of-all-rape-and-sexual-assault-victims-in-norfol-9404638/), [[4]](https://www.sexualabusecompensationadvice.org.uk/our-research-into-rape-and-sexual-offence-rates-in-the-uk/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[3]](https://www.irishexaminer.com/world/arid-30748597.html), [[6]](https://www.eadt.co.uk/news/24538668.figures-reveal-731-children-arrested-in-suffolk-2023/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[4]](https://www.sexualabusecompensationadvice.org.uk/our-research-into-rape-and-sexual-offence-rates-in-the-uk/), [[5]](https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/articles/childsexualabuseinenglandandwales/yearendingmarch2019), [[7]](https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/research-resources/statistics-briefings/child-sexual-abuse)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/2060767/children-aged-five-and-under-accused-sexual-assault-uk> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.lynnnews.co.uk/news/nearly-half-of-all-rape-and-sexual-assault-victims-in-norfol-9404638/> - Between September 2023 and September 2024, Norfolk Police recorded 3,280 rape or sexual assault offences, with 1,120 victims aged 11 to 17 and 400 victims aged 10 or under. A significant proportion of these victims were vulnerable teenagers. The data also revealed that 851 suspects were under 18, including 131 primary school-aged children. The report highlights a concerning rise in sexual offences among young people in Norfolk, with a 10% increase compared to three years prior. The low charge rate of 5% is attributed to court backlogs and delays in the justice system.
3. <https://www.irishexaminer.com/world/arid-30748597.html> - An investigation revealed that children as young as five have been accused of sexual offences in UK schools. The number of sex crimes reported at UK schools nearly trebled in four years, from 719 in 2011-12 to nearly 2,000 in 2014-15. The youngest alleged victims were also five years old. The findings, obtained through Freedom of Information requests, have raised concerns about the prevalence of sexual harassment and violence in schools and the need for compulsory relationship education to address aggressive sexual behaviour.
4. <https://www.sexualabusecompensationadvice.org.uk/our-research-into-rape-and-sexual-offence-rates-in-the-uk/> - Data from the Metropolitan Police for the 2023/24 period shows 27,213 rape and sexual offences, with 1,415 charges. Suspects aged 2-10 numbered 125, and victims aged 0-10 were 1,666. In Norfolk, there were 3,280 offences, with 161 charges. Suspects aged 0-10 numbered 93, and victims aged 0-10 were 400. These statistics highlight the concerning involvement of very young children in both committing and being victims of sexual offences, underscoring the need for targeted interventions and support.
5. <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/articles/childsexualabuseinenglandandwales/yearendingmarch2019> - The Office for National Statistics provides data on child sexual abuse in England and Wales, noting that police-recorded crime does not effectively quantify online offending, where often one offence can relate to multiple instances of child sexual abuse material. The hidden nature of both online and offline child sexual abuse means it is hard to detect and under-reported. The report highlights the need for improved detection and reporting mechanisms to address the scale of child sexual abuse.
6. <https://www.eadt.co.uk/news/24538668.figures-reveal-731-children-arrested-in-suffolk-2023/> - Between April 2023 and April 2024, 731 individuals under 18 were arrested in Suffolk for various crimes, including rape, assault, theft, and murder. The most common crime was assault, with 75 youths arrested for common assault and 64 for actual bodily harm. Notably, 23 children were arrested for the rape of a female under 16. These figures highlight the concerning involvement of young people in serious criminal activities and the need for targeted interventions to address underlying issues.
7. <https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/research-resources/statistics-briefings/child-sexual-abuse> - Research indicates that approximately 1 in 20 children in the UK have experienced sexual abuse. The majority of these offences are committed by someone the child knows. The report underscores the need for effective safeguarding measures and support systems to protect children from sexual abuse and exploitation. It also highlights the importance of early intervention and education to prevent such abuse from occurring.