



ANBU UK Tamil Society event- Interactive questions and answers

Friday 10th November

Hosted by Kings College London and Southampton University

Compiled by ANBU team and contributions from panellist:

Dr Jane Street- Associate director of psychology and psychotherapies for South West London and St Georges NHS mental health trust.

Dr Anuja Sunthuramoorthy- Junior doctor working in Hastings and aspiring psychiatrist.

No	Question	Answer
1	How can you make your child aware of sexual abuse and at what point in time should you talk to them about it?	<p><i>The earlier this conversation can be had, the better. It does not need to explicitly explain what sexual abuse is as you do not want to scare them. As they are growing up, when in natural setting such as bath time or dressing themselves, you can name their private parts (so they are aware) and explain to them that nobody should be able to hurt them through their private parts and if someone does, that they should tell a parent or caregiver.</i></p> <p><i>This is a useful clip from NSPCC explaining the underwear rule: https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/keeping-children-safe/underwear-rule/</i></p> <p><i>The most important part of this is the attitude that's taken - reinforcing that a child's body parts are special will make it less of a taboo topic to talk about. There also needs to be a larger discussion about touching – abusers don't always start by touching private parts – it can start with cuddling or gentle touches. What's important is that no child should be encouraged to kiss or hug adults if they are not comfortable with this. Children need to have permission to say no to giving an uncle or aunt a hug if they don't want to. (Please see ANBU Canada video in Tamil on Sexuality part 1 and 2: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fi1TipBWRtM)</i></p> <p><i>It is also important, particularly when talking to teenagers/ young adults, to listen and be non-judgmental. Abusers often create a psychological association/dependency with the individual before there is any physical or sexual element to the abuse.</i></p>
2	How could an adult survivor open up about their childhood abuse after failing at the first attempt and feeling neglected?	<p><i>Disclosing about your childhood sexual abuse is always going to be difficult and I can imagine feeling neglected the first time makes it even harder to open up a second time, so I am sorry to hear that.</i></p> <p><i>Thinking about who you are disclosing to and their emotional availability, if you know that they are quite empathetic and a good listener in general, this may help. You could also try small steps - this is your experience so you can pace it as you need. If saying certain parts of the incident at a time helps, then maybe take this approach – you would be able to gauge the supportiveness of the person through these small encounters. Most importantly, know what helps you to take care of</i></p>

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		<p><i>yourself after a disclosure, particularly if it isn't the reaction you hoped for. Knowing that you can write in a journal or go for a walk/listen to music or essentially being able to 'hold' yourself is vital.</i></p> <p><i>It is important to realise that just because one person was unable to support you in the necessary way, it does not mean that you are alone. It is important to realise that there are many options outside even friends and family to find support. Sometimes it is easier to disclose information to a 'stranger' such as a counsellor or therapist or doctor in a non-judgemental professional environment before speaking to someone you care about.</i></p> <p><i>To add, NSPCC statistics show that 90% of young survivors have had negative experiences of disclosure at some point, mostly where the people they told had responded poorly. This is unfortunately common where the community doesn't have awareness or the tools required to know how to respond.</i> https://www.nspcc.org.uk/services-and-resources/research-and-resources/2013/no-one-noticed-no-one-heard/ <i>That is why ANBU exists. We want to change our community, we want to draw upon our community's strengths and compassion to create an environment that is supportive and caring.</i></p> <p><i>When Vathanee first disclosed to her parents, she was initially met with denial and disbelief. It took several difficult discussions before information started to sink in. They are now in a place where they can understand and empathise with Vathanee but it took time and resilience. It may take a while for the disclosure to be accepted, but know that it's not impossible.</i></p>
3	<p>How can older (Parents/grandparents) be engaged in this awkward yet important topic. How can narrow perceptions be eliminated?</p>	<p><i>I think change starts from you. The fact that you were able to attend and listen and help raise your own awareness is great. New topics and change can be difficult but it only takes one or two people to begin talking about it before the topic becomes 'normalised'. The lack of exposure to this topic contributes to the difficulties in talking about it – so the more it is talked about the more it can be engaged!</i></p> <p><i>There is strength in numbers. If you have siblings or friends who can be present with you when having such a conversation then you will feel better supported in discussing it. The reason for the stigma in our culture is not just due to the fear of the unknown, but also because when anything is verbalised, it makes the situation realer.</i></p> <p><i>There are a range of emotions that survivors go through when raising something like this with elders in the family. It is important to acknowledge that those close to you will also go through a range of emotions when they hear about a disclosure, any they won't always know the 'right' way of processing the information. They may experience guilt. Some may re-direct their emotions to the survivor. Family therapy can explore your relationship with each family member and help you through your recovery.</i></p>



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		<p><i>Again, attitude is important here - forcing the subject down people and guilt-tripping them into having to see how bad it is may not work as well at engaging as coming from the perspective of a child and the trauma it can cause as they grow older.</i></p> <p><i>Family therapy can explore your relationship with each family member and help you through your recovery.</i></p>
4	How can we see the signs of someone who might be a victim of sexual abuse?	<p><i>Different people can react in different ways. It is important to have open and honest dialogue with children and not to make accusations or ask leading questions, especially to young children. Always listen to what they have to say and do not put words in their mouth so that nothing is taken out of context.</i></p> <p><i>Some common indicators may be withdrawal from parents and peers. Some may become more clingy or want to be around their parents more and not so much others. Children can start wetting the bed, become isolated, lose eye contact and/or show developmental delay (the condition of a child being less developed mentally or physically than is normal for their age) because they do not know how to cope with the abuse. They can have unexplained bruising or show sexual disinhibition because they think that sexual activities are normal. When a child knows or shows certain sexual behaviours, it should be questioned how they know about it.</i></p> <p><i>Other signs include sexual behaviour that is not appropriate for their age (e.g. knowing things that haven't been taught at school) and there may also be physical signs such as soreness/bruises on their vagina/anus.</i></p> <p><i>Older children may be showing signs of disengagement at school or college or university. They may not act themselves, self-harm, have dark thoughts. If someone is stressed, over/ under-eating/ sleeping, their behaviour should be questioned.</i></p> <p><i>NSPCC is a great resource for some more signs and indicators.</i></p>
5	It took me 10 years to finally admit what happened to a close friend. She told me to never tell my parents.	<p><i>It's great that you were able to open up to someone; it takes great courage to do this. I'm sorry to hear that it may not have been the reaction you wanted.</i></p> <p><i>Remember, this is your story and your journey. It is completely up to you to decide who you would like to talk to about the incident, and if letting your parents know is something you want to do then that is your decision. It is important to factor in how you will take care of yourself after disclosing to them and that you are prepared for any reactions you may not like. Thinking about how you would be able to manage these may help.</i></p> <p><i>To add, NSPCC statistics show that 90% of young survivors have had negative experiences of disclosure at some point, mostly where the people they told had responded poorly. This is unfortunately common where the community doesn't have awareness or the tools required to know how to respond.</i></p> <p><i>https://www.nspcc.org.uk/services-and-resources/research-and-resources/2013/no-one-noticed-no-one-heard/</i></p> <p><i>That is why ANBU exists. We want to change our community, we want to draw upon our community's strengths and compassion to create an environment that is supportive and caring.</i></p>

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		<p><i>When Vathanee first disclosed to her parents, she was initially met with denial and disbelief. It took several difficult discussions before information started to sink in. They are now in a place where they can understand and empathise with Vathanee but it took time and resilience. It may take a while for the disclosure to be accepted, but know that it's not impossible.</i></p>
6	<p>Can perpetrators be brought to justice for historic sexual abuse?</p> <p>See Q44</p>	<p><i>This is possible, as Vathanee described during the panel discussion. Vathanee gave evidence, along with other survivors, of her experience of sexual abuse from over 20 years ago to the police. This led to a court case and eventual prosecution of the perpetrator.</i></p>
7	<p>How do you even approach this topic with parents when you don't know the Tamil terminology to use?</p>	<p><i>Great question! It is difficult to approach this question when language can be a barrier. As a starter, it might be easier to use descriptive terminology as opposed to the 'correct term' - chances are they may not know the correct Tamil for it either. As part of raising awareness, our outreach projects aim to clarify some of the terminology in the Tamil presentations. We are consulting with Tamil health care specialists to correctly define terms and share with partners working in the sector.</i></p> <p><i>Starting somewhere is key and explaining it with the descriptive words that you know may be enough for them to understand too.</i></p> <p><i>Sometimes you do not need to be explicit for your parents to understand you. They understand more than you realise. Saying 'below the waist at the front/ back' 'chest' in Tamil may aid you in trying to explain what happened. Also it all comes down to defining consent and behaviours occurring without consent, whilst stressing the age of the survivor at the time.</i></p>
8	<p>What about the fact that even if parents know, the community is so abrasive that you couldn't do anything about the perpetrator anyway?</p>	<p><i>If you feel that taking action against the perpetrator is something you need to do, then I think it's important for your healing that you do. Also, please understand that for every person that is not able to support you, there are many more people who can, including ANBU.</i></p> <p><i>The sad truth is that there will always be someone or a collective that will always have something to say, and as scary it may be to go against the community, if this feels right for you then you do have supportive resources that you can lean on.</i></p>
9	<p>I can see language barrier playing an important part in the impunity of abusers</p> <p>See Q7</p>	<p><i>It is difficult to approach this question when language can be a barrier. As a starter, it might be easier to use descriptive terminology as opposed to the 'correct term', chances are they may not know the correct Tamil for it either. As part of raising awareness, our outreach projects aim to clarify some of these in the Tamil presentations. We are consulting with Tamil health care specialist to correctly define terms ad share with partners working in the sector.</i></p> <p><i>Starting somewhere is key and explaining it with the descriptive words that you know may be enough for them to understand too.</i></p>

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		<p><i>Sometimes you do not need to be explicit for parents to understand you. They understand more than you realise. Saying 'below the waist at the front/ back' 'chest' in Tamil may aid you in trying to explain what happened. Also, it all comes down to defining consent and behaviours occurring without consent, whilst stressing the age of the survivor at the time.</i></p> <p><i>Because of the above, we do not think that language barriers will result in the impunity of perpetrators.</i></p>
10	<p>Its been so long since the incident happened, I think it's selfish on my behalf to tell parents now</p>	<p><i>By trying to protect your parents for so long when you yourself needed support and protection shows that you are far from selfish. You must remember that you were young and deserved to be taken care of, if not telling your parents is something that is still affecting you, then it might be useful to find a good time to do this.</i></p> <p><i>Abuse can impact our adult lives in ways that are not always obvious, in behaviours and our motivations. A large part of 'feeling stuck' in adulthood can be about not fully accepting what has happened in the past and not being able to move on in the present. If it's impacting your life now, the abuse may be having a bigger impact on your life than you think. Reflecting on your past is sometime required to move on, and it's important to draw upon your support network to help you through that process, which may include your parents.</i></p> <p><i>Again, we would stress the importance of self care and taking care of yourself when disclosing. Knowing that you may get a reaction you may not like and thinking about how you would manage this beforehand may be beneficial.</i></p>
11	<p>Why do you think the victim is hesitant to talk to their own parents when they should be the ones they trust the most? Is this common in the culture and upbringing of ethnic minorities</p>	<p><i>Every relationship between a child and their parents is different. In many cultures, including within the Caucasian community, sex and abuse are still deemed as taboo. Some people may find it easier to confide in their parents than others and every parent will react differently to such discussions. However, there's a lot of shame attached to the topic of sex/sexual abuse, particularly in the Tamil community, which may make it more difficult for the survivor to talk about it, with even their closest family and friends.</i></p> <p><i>In South Asian communities, positive participation in a community is a combination of pride and honour; thus, shame and dishonour may have serious consequences for survivors and offenders. Cultural norms and traditions, in community that place importance in honour-based value systems can make it more difficult to talk about childhood sexual abuse, which can be true of Tamil communities.</i></p> <p>https://hydra.hull.ac.uk/assets/hull:13298/content</p> <p><i>There also may be worries about what people would say/feeling threatened by the perpetrator/ fear of not being believed – so it is quite a complicated process when thinking about disclosing. However, the more we are able to talk about it and make it 'okay' to talk about, the less potential hesitancy.</i></p>

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12	Sometimes the case is the abuser himself had been abused during his childhood- does that mean me a victim, I have to keep quiet and just be empathetic?	<p><i>Not at all - just because someone has been abused themselves does not mean that they have the right to abuse you. No survivor should ever feel as if they should 'keep quiet.' As I mentioned during the panel discussion, nothing condones such behaviour. You are allowed to feel what you want to feel.</i></p> <p><i>It is not uncommon for the abuser to have experienced abuse themselves. However, in every situation, as an adult, you have a choice, and the abuser chose to abuse. We all have the opportunity to learn and grow from our experiences, but that is our own responsibility – we can't do it for someone else.</i></p> <p><i>As a survivor yourself, your priority is you and healing yourself. Even though it may be easier to make excuses and try to see where they have come from, this takes you away from your experience and how you felt and what it took away from you. I think it's hard but it's important to practice empathy for yourself too.</i></p>
13	Why is the problem of sexual abuse so prevalent among Tamils?	<p><i>Unfortunately childhood sexual abuse is common in most communities. It is not just about culture, patriarchal societies, sexism, power and control. Lack of knowledge, education and awareness also play a part. We do not have any figures to confirm the prevalence of child sexual abuse in the Tamil community, which may be due to the lack of knowledge around the topic of childhood sexual abuse, resulting in a lot of disclosures being missed.</i></p> <p><i>We at ANBU want to start with the Tamil community and raise awareness that it happens.</i></p>
14	How is the problem solved?	<p><i>By problem, we will take it as meaning the issue of childhood sexual abuse (hope it's right). We think it begins with raising awareness and spreading knowledge. Even more so with young children - through parents and school, allowing them to be aware of what their body parts are and what is okay and what is not okay allows us to build a good relationship with children in order to build a foundation for them to come to us when they know something is not right.</i></p> <p><i>Being comfortable enough to talk about childhood sexual abuse and showing children and adults alike that it is not a taboo but a topic that's necessary may help decrease it.</i></p>
15	Do you think our culture and being 'Tamil' makes it harder for us to speak about things?	<p><i>We would say that the topic of sexual abuse is difficult to talk about in any culture due to its sensitive nature.</i></p> <p><i>The lack of awareness and knowledge around childhood sexual abuse may make this even more difficult for people coming from a Tamil community, so yes we may have some additional barriers to overcome. Also lack of language and intergenerational culture of staying silent can make it all the more difficult.</i></p>
16	This is common I think	<p><i>At least 1 in 20 children in the UK experience childhood sexual abuse.</i></p>
17	How do you overcome the guilt of passing the burden on to a parent	<p><i>Seeing it as a burden that you are passing on makes it more difficult to process. This is an experience that you have gone through and sharing it with your parents may alleviate it (it may not at the same time so it's important to think about this too). It might be useful to think about what would you like to come out of telling your parents - is it something that they are able to provide? What happens if they can't? Will you still be able to take care of yourself and have a good foundation to go back to?</i></p>

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		<p><i>When you were little your parents took on the responsibility to be there to care for you; hopefully, they met all your needs as a baby and a child, looking after you when you were sick, making sure you were fed and clothed and educated. This is part of being a parent and most parents say that feeling of wanting to be there to care for their child doesn't change as they get older. Of course, sharing that you have been abused may be a shock and they may also feel guilt that they didn't protect you. This is normal and part of what being a parent is all about, and most parents would say that they want to be there for their child and support them.</i></p> <p><i>Take things gently with yourself and find ways of caring for yourself.</i></p>
18	How can you make a victim open up about the issue?	<p><i>I don't think you can make a survivor open up about childhood sexual abuse (hoping that that is what you are referring to). It is very much under their control and their pace and it's important to respect this as pushing them might make them recline.</i></p> <p><i>Being able to give them a supportive environment, being patient and listening without giving judgement or advice are some great starting points to allow someone to begin to talk about it. Remember that sometimes they just need to be 'heard' so being present when they are ready is key.</i></p>
19	Do you have any advice about balancing your needs vs your family needs? It's tricky in our culture as you have shown.	<p><i>I think it's important to remember that this is your own journey and identifying your needs is pivotal as you are growing up. Knowing how you want to grow and what keeps you grounded and safe when you do experience discomfort around this topic will build a great foundation for you.</i></p> <p><i>When it comes to your family's needs, they will be able to take care of themselves. It is easy for you to take responsibility for their needs too (understandably so, considering how we have grown up) but remember that if you are juggling your needs and theirs – when these don't align – you will struggle. Giving your family their own responsibility to take care of themselves with this may be helpful.</i></p> <p><i>This is where family therapy may also help you and your family whilst you support each other in your journey. Counselling can help identify how to tackle such problems too.</i></p>
20	If the victim wants to talk about the incident with the abuser and make them realise, how should he/she go about it?	<p><i>This is not something we would recommend.</i></p> <p><i>Sadly, most abusers will deny or minimise their behaviour, turn the problem back on to the survivor by saying they made it happen and so leave them feeling more confused and vulnerable. It also gives them the opportunity to start covering their tracks and possibly even bad mouthing you to the rest of the family.</i></p> <p><i>We would be extremely cautious about entering into any discussion with an abuser, as sadly most of them do not think they have done anything wrong. We would also stress the importance of self care in this instance. What is it the survivor looking for? Is it for someone to take responsibility for what has happened to them? If it is, I think it's important to consider what will happen if no responsibility is taken.</i></p>

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		<p><i>It is possible to make some peace without having to talk to the abuser.</i></p>
21	<p>I'm a survivor who finds it hard to make any relationship I enter due to my past trauma but I am never able to tell my partner about it causing my relationships to end---how can I go about this?</p>	<p><i>We are really sorry to hear that relationships are hard to enter due to your past trauma. I wonder where you are at with your trauma? Have you been able to reflect on what it is that ends these relationships? Maybe identifying whether it's trusting your partner/being intimate/ feeling the need that you have to tell them/or something else altogether will help you think about what is hindering you.</i></p> <p><i>Keeping a reflective journal or trying out therapy may be a good place to explore this, particularly if you are stuck with knowing what it is that is that is bothering you.</i></p> <p><i>It's really important to give any relationship time to grow – you may feel that this is something you need to tell a partner early on, and so put a lot of pressure on yourself. I think there is a message through all of these posts to take this gradually, be self-caring and only share as much as you comfortable with. The same principles apply here. It's very likely that you will find it hard to trust people who want to get close to you, and it's important to get to know any potential new partner so maybe spend time finding out a bit more about each other and getting to know each other? Supporting someone who is processing and recovering from abuse is a confusing role sometimes, so maybe have some resources for your partner to look at? Then you won't have to explain so much.</i></p> <p><i>There are some tips for partners on this website: http://www.supportforpartners.org/faq.html</i></p>
22	<p>Patriarchal mind-set is only a reason for this, how men see themselves as being dominant</p>	<p><i>The patriarchal mind- set is also engraved in many cultures, including the Tamil community. Whilst the patriarchal mind-set certainly contributes to the occurrence of childhood sexual abuse, it is not the only contributing factor.</i></p> <p><i>This is a huge topic! Lots of factors contribute, and a patriarchal culture is definitely a context that will enable the abuse of women and children, and make it hard for them to speak up and be heard. It's not the whole story though, as women also abuse, and many men would see their role as being a protector of women and children and never abuse. The struggle for equality and human rights is an important one, and something we all need to take responsibility for being part of. Judith Herman has written an excellent book on Trauma which further explores the social context and power relationships</i></p> <p><i>https://www.amazon.co.uk/Trauma-Recovery-Aftermath-Violence-Political/dp/0465061710/ref=pd_cp_14_1?encoding=UTF8&psc=1&refRID=MAZBN7E4SCESKDSQ1W33</i></p>
23	<p>A great initiative. Have you looked into other communities which sadly inevitably face the same</p>	<p><i>Thank you! We welcome all individuals from different ethnicities to our events!</i></p>

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	issues around the taboos and any paralleled with the potential solutions going forward?	<i>At present, our material and awareness raising initiatives may be more tailored to the Tamil community, however we are really keen to share our resources with other communities online and any other way possible and welcome everyone to our outreach projects and discussions.</i>
24	If we cant talk to our parents about the delicate topic such as sex, how can we talk to them about abuse?	<i>This is a good point and to echo some of the other questions I think we all have to start somewhere when talking about sex or abuse, so even bringing the topic to the forefront and having a general chat about it may help.</i> <i>As mentioned previously maybe talking about it from the point of view of safeguarding and protecting our future generation and children may be more palatable than talking about the injustice/ how it's wrong. This allows people to come from a different angle.</i>
25	As the future generations of parents, how will we be able to introduce this topic to our children without instilling fear within them? Thank for your info today ☺ See Q1	<i>The earlier this conversation can be had the better. It does not need to explicitly explain what sexual abuse is as you do not want to scare them. As they are growing up, when in natural setting such as bath time or dressing themselves, you can name their private parts (so they are aware) and explain to them that nobody should be able to hurt them through their private parts and if someone does, that they should tell a parent or caregiver.</i> <i>The most important part of this is the attitude that's taken, reinforcing that a child's body parts are special will make it less of a taboo topic to talk about. (Please see ANBU Canada video in Tamil on Sexuality part 1 and 2: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fi1TlpBWRtM)</i> <i>I think it is a conversation that sits within a wider context of talking about boundaries, safe touch etc. and also about showing your children that you respect their rights to have a say over who touches them by not encouraging them to hug people when they don't want to. The NSPCC has some good ideas https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/keeping-children-safe/underwear-rule/</i>
26	Feedback: the questions were not answered properly!	<i>Apologies for that. Time (and technology) was against us during the evening. We hope these FAQs help.</i>
27	What happened if the abuser is a parent and you care for them even so. How does one deal with something like that?	<i>This can be very, very confusing for a child and even an adult survivor. I think recognising what had happened was wrong and that their parents did abuse their power can take a long time to acknowledge, particularly as their feelings of love and attachment can be very much entangled. Therefore, a lot of the work may be about untangling what was right and what was wrong. Putting themselves first and allowing themselves to heal before thinking about caring for the parent may be a good first step. There is no right or wrong in this and it doesn't make anyone a bad person for caring for someone that abused them, it just means that they need to take greater care in looking after themselves and think about what it is that they need in their own life.</i> <i>This is why abuse can be so damaging – it is often entangled with relationships with people we love and should be able to trust. As a child, we often manage the conflict by separating it out in our minds, and it is only as an adult that we can begin</i>

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		<p><i>to put the picture together and make sense of it. It is something that can be dealt with only bit by bit – you may hear people say that you should forgive or you should cut off all contact, but there is no right or wrong way so don't feel bad if you don't know what to do. It is a very personal decision and journey for each survivor, and each person need to work out what is most healing for them. For many people, finding a therapist they can trust to talk it through with is key to this healing process, as it's very hard to make sense of things by yourself.</i></p>
28	Highly unlikely, but had there ever been an incident where the abuser has come forward with what they did?	<p><i>We do not know of any cases, no.</i></p>
29	My abuse started when I was 13. The abuser keeps saying I should have known better at that age as suppose to when I was 6 years old and it all happened with my consent. But I didn't explicitly say yes. How is consent normally expressed?	<p><i>I am sorry to hear that you had to experience this and I'm glad you were able to voice your question.</i></p> <p><i>At 13, it is important to remember that you were still a child, therefore there isn't a question of you should have known better. If you felt that something was wrong and felt that you didn't have the power to say no or felt forced into something that you did not want to do and they were aware of this – this is not consent.</i></p> <p><i>My first response is that your abuser was the adult, and older than you, so by that logic they should have known better, and the responsibility for what they did is all theirs.</i></p> <p><i>We are said to have consented when we understand and agree to something and give permission for it to happen. In health we often ask people to sign forms as a way of recording that we have their consent, but in human relationships it's a bit more complicated! At 13 you were legally still a child, and therefore according to the law, you cannot consent anyway. Here is what the law says about it</i></p> <p><i>'The law does not allow a person's consent to sexual activity to have effect in the following situations:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>• where the person giving consent did not understand what was happening and so could not give informed consent, for example in the case of a child or someone suffering from a severe mental disability;</i> <i>• where the person giving consent was under the relevant age of consent. '</i> <p><i>If you are wondering why you didn't explicitly say yes or no, this is probably due to the way we react to a threatening situation. When we are faced by a threat our brain activates a threat response – this is designed to help us survive and is automatic. We may react in a number of ways – the most obvious is fight or flight – we fight back or we run away. But we can't always do those things, and so we have two other reactions – freeze and appease. Freezing is just what it sounds like – it's what mice do when a cat catches them, and probably gives them a better chance of getting away. Appeasing means that we try to keep safe by just going along with whatever the abuser wants – we avoid more harm by doing this.</i></p>

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ANBU UK Tamil Society event- Interactive questions and answers

		<p><i>This is very different to consent or agreeing to something – it is part of our survival mechanism, and not under our direct control.</i></p> <p>Have a look at this clip: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pZwvrXVavnQ</p> <p><i>Abusers will always try to blame the survivor, and try to avoid responsibility. The age at which it started to happen makes no difference – you may need to keep reminding yourself of this, and treat yourself with kindness and compassion.</i></p>
30	As a survivor, how do you go about overcoming the experience and feel empowered?	<p><i>Overcoming and healing is a like a journey, and for each person the path is different. However, there are some common steps that most survivors will recognise. The first step is to recognise what happened to you – sometimes you may have blocked out or ‘forgotten’ what happened to you. Then begins the process of making sense of this – what happened, how it is affecting you now and what you want to do about it. There are parallels to a grieving process – initial denial or disbelief gives way to anger, and searching for meaning. Gradually we are able to accept our loss and find a new meaning in our lives, though part of us never forgets. It’s a painful process, and to have someone alongside us makes a huge difference. This may be friends, family, other survivors or a therapist.</i></p> <p><i>Most people find that it is very hard to share what has happened – the feelings of shame can be immense, and we are naturally afraid of being seen as bad or at fault. However, finding someone you can trust to talk to is key – it’s also one of the reasons why ANBU is so important!</i></p> <p><i>Finding your voice when you have been silenced - speaking out against what happened to you- is empowering. Talking to other survivors can be very inspiring and empowering – they give a message of hope that you can heal and take back power in your life. There are lots of online resources out there as well - survivors have so much in common, and it’s important to know that you are not alone, and that there is no shame in disclosing what has happened to you. Developing self-compassion is important too – we need to find ways to care for ourselves with love and gentleness.</i></p>
31	Legally, what consequences are there for the perpetrator?	<p><i>Childhood sexual abuse is against the law and punishable by law. The perpetrator can face prison time depending on police investigations into the reported incident(s).</i></p>
32	How do we bring up topics like this , with such a lack of terminology/vocab to use in Tamil? See Q7 & Q9	<p><i>It is difficult to approach this question when language can be a barrier. I think as a starter, it might be easier to use descriptive terminology as opposed to the ‘correct term’, chances are they may not know the correct Tamil for it either. As part of raising awareness, our outreach projects aim to clarify some of the vocabulary in the Tamil presentations.</i></p> <p><i>Starting somewhere is key and explaining it with the descriptive words that you know may be enough for them to understand too.</i></p>
33	Can anything be done if the perpetrator is in a different country?	<p><i>It depends on what kind of action you would like to pursue. If you would like to take the formal route, then it starts by making a report to the police in the UK, and they will make enquires on whether it can be escalated to a prosecution case. Prosecution is not the only option.</i></p>

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		<p>Victim Support have some great resources, including this factsheet https://www.victimsupport.org.uk/sites/default/files/Victim%20Reporting%20Factsheet_0.pdf Their website is here https://www.victimsupport.org.uk/crime-info/types-crime/childhood-abuse</p>
34	<p>The survivors are very brave for opening up. Many thanks. What would you guys say to families with young children regarding how to best look out for them? What could have your community done differently to protect you?</p>	<p>Thank you.</p> <p>Vathanee: It is important to be aware of who is around your child, even close relatives. Make sure you speak to your children about boundaries and the difference between a good touch and a bad touch (or underwear rule mentioned earlier: https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/keeping-children-safe/underwear-rule/). Its important that parents take time to visit the numerous websites online on how to safeguard their children, and they have plenty of information and signs to look out for. (Please see ANBU Canada video in Tamil on Sexuality part 1 and 2: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fi1TlpBWRtM) The community should feel comfortable questioning relationships, and parents should feel comfortable being more emotionally involved with their children.</p> <p>Jumani: Build a good relationship with your child so they feel like they can come and talk to you about things. The community needs to be able to accept that things like sexual abuse happens. It shouldn't be something which is kept quiet about. People need to know that it is wrong and that it is not accepted within any community.</p>
35	<p>What impact has the sri Lankan civil war (and use of sexual abuse by the sri Lankan army) had with promulgating the use of sexual abuse within the Tamil community. (See post-apartheid South Africa and rape culture)</p>	<p>It is difficult to make a link between sexual violence in Sri Lanka to childhood sexual abuse/sexual abuse within the Tamil community in the UK. This would require research and specifically looking at research participants' experiences during the war. Of course, the impact of migration alone can be traumatic.</p> <p>Right now ANBU UK is focused on the UK diaspora community – however, this would be an area we would like to investigate further.</p>
36	<p>When I disclosed, I was in therapy and was made to take it further without a choice, but luckily it went to court and then the individual who was my tutor went to jail.</p>	<p>I am sorry you experienced childhood sexual abuse during your childhood. I am also sorry to hear that it was reported without your backing. Glad the perpetrator is in jail.</p> <p>Thank you for sharing this. Therapists are in a very difficult position sometimes, as they have to think about protecting other people/children as well as confidentiality. I am glad that your perpetrator was convicted and is now in jail. You have shown amazing courage and I hope that it has helped you to see that they have faced justice.</p>

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37	Do you think a survivor can come fully out of mental and emotional state they go through?	<i>It is important that the survivor is given space to heal - there is no set timeframe for this and it can take some people their whole lifetime. Everyone's experience is different and everyone heals at their own pace. ANBU is here to provide resources to support the healing process, and by talking with other survivors you will see that you are not alone and it is possible to move on from your childhood trauma.</i>
38	I feel powerless in a lot of situations now and feel like that has made me more vulnerable to more sexual abuse. I feel like I'm constantly in fear of any male relative or otherwise and genuinely struggle to have a good relationship with any male other than my dad since he is the only one I trust See Q21	<i>I'm really sorry to hear that relationships are hard to enter due to your past trauma. I wonder where you are at with your trauma? Have you been able to reflect on what it is that ends these relationships? Maybe identifying whether it's trusting your partner/being intimate/ feeling the need that you have to tell them/or something else altogether will help you think about what is hindering you.</i> <i>Keeping a reflective journal or trying out therapy may be a good place to explore this, particularly if you are stuck with knowing what it is that is that is bothering you</i> <i>You have made huge steps in just acknowledging what has happened to you – it will take time to learn how to trust men. It's important that you can trust your dad, as you have a model of man who is kind and protective, and you will be able to build on this. Give yourself time, and try not to put pressure on yourself – every one of us needs to show that we can be trusted, and no-one should expect you to trust them without question. You probably have a very active threat system, which is triggered by men – this is natural. Finding ways of calming this down is often helpful, and I really like the compassionate mind model – there is lots more information about this here https://compassionatemind.co.uk/resources and also here http://self-compassion.org/</i>
39	Are you planning to create awareness of this topic in other countries especially European ones such as France and Germany were there is a large Tamil community?	<i>We are aware there are large groups of the Tamil diaspora in Germany and France. It would be great to expand our outreach in time to those areas. Right now our focus is the UK.</i>
40	What has been the feedback in the communities you have approached and worked with raising awareness? Do you sense progress and willingness from our people?	<i>We have been taken aback by how supportive and encouraging the community has been to date. We have spoken with elders, parents and professionals in the Tamil community, all recognising the importance of this work, and they have certainly shown signs of willingness. However, the lack of knowledge of childhood sexual abuse is also clear, with many people not really understanding its impact in adulthood which is a huge part of our work and what we endeavour to continue to do!</i>
41	Its not just our parents with a narrow mind but I feel	<i>There is definitely more awareness amongst the younger generation on childhood sexual abuse, particularly since the influence of mainstream child abuse cases. However, as first generation migrants, there are many factors at play when</i>

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	even the young people are being heavily influenced by the mind-set of our parents generation regardless of being brought up in the UK	<p><i>navigating host country norms and Tamil cultural norms. It is up to the individual to determine their own morals and principles, since they are shaped differently by society. For example, sexual abuse is not condoned in the Tamil culture, but 'keeping quiet' is thought to be the best way to cope with it if it happens.</i></p> <p><i>However, we at ANBU, as a Tamil community-led approach, hope we can help others realise that childhood sexual abuse is wrong, and that we need to break the silence!</i></p>
42	Can the perpetrator ever be forgiven?	<p><i>You may hear that you should forgive and forget, and this can become a pressure. There is no right or wrong way of healing or in fact dealing with a perpetrator. It is important not to put too much pressure on the journey. It is a personal choice to forgive, and it is a place you may or may not come to. The most important thing is to focus on your own healing and coming to a place of self-compassion. You can then decide what is best for you – no-one else can walk your path or make those decisions for you.</i></p>
43	How did Jumani or Vathanee resolve it now they are in a better place- did they press charges against the abuser? How did this impact the family dynamics?	<p><i>Vathanee: I pressed charges; two other people also gave statements. He was given a prison sentence. Family dynamics did change - Dad's other two brothers and their families have ostracised me. But it made other relationships in my life stronger and I feel like I am living my honest real life.</i></p> <p><i>Jumani: Family Dynamics did change but it brought us closer as a family. We've learned to be more open and talk about things if there is ever a problem</i></p>
44	Can the perpetrator be punished for their acts? And can it be done lawfully when you can't specifically prove sexual abuse?	<p><i>This is possible as Vathanee described during the panel discussion. Vathanee gave evidence along with other survivor(s) of her experience of sexual abuse from over 20 years ago to the police. This led to a court case and eventual prosecution of the perpetrator.</i></p>
45	My cousin and I were physically and sexually abused when we were kids. Starting 3/ 4 Manifested in many ways to the point my cousin committed suicide. It good there are outlets now even if there wasn't any for him..	<p><i>Thank you for sharing this – we are very sorry to hear about your cousin, and for highlighted that boys can also be affected very badly by abuse. It can be especially hard for boys and men to talk about their experiences, so the work of ANBU is very important. It was wonderful to see so many young men in the audience and I hope that this is a taboo that can be broken down.</i></p> <p><i>We hope you are receiving support to deal with the present and know that ANBU is here to support your healing journey. Please see signposted organisations.</i></p>
46	Is mental health a safety barrier for the perpetrator?	<p><i>Abusers will try to make many excuses for their behaviour. Having a mental health problem does not mean you do not know right from wrong, though some kinds of mental health problems may make people more impulsive. If someone is</i></p>

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ANBU UK Tamil Society event- Interactive questions and answers

		<p><i>unable to control their behaviour due to a mental health problem then that is a very serious matter, and the person needs treatment and possibly even to be placed in a secure mental health hospital. Trying to say that the abuse was due to mental health is therefore not necessarily a safety barrier.</i></p> <p>All abuse is wrong. <i>Abuse is essentially a powerful person exhibiting control over a vulnerable person. If both persons are vulnerable, it does not discount the abuse. The adult/more powerful person still has the responsibility for their own behaviour.</i></p> <p><i>Usually if a person is abusing a child secondary to a mental health condition, there will be other symptoms of impulsiveness or symptoms. This is uncommon and such cases are rare. Therefore to say that childhood sexual abuse is solely due to the perpetrator's mental illness is unfair.</i></p>
47	Can you please answer any unanswered questions outside of this event, e.g. As a blog post/on your website/on fb?	<i>Absolutely. These responses will be made public on our Facebook page and Instagram page.</i>
48	Well done Anbu for being very open about a topic which is very difficult to talk about within our own generation as well as our parents	<i>This is part of our mission to spread awareness of childhood sexual abuse in all parts of our community.</i>
49	Do you think that the 10 sessions that the NHS provides are sufficient to truly help someone? (Especially if they are unable to fund for further sessions themselves)	<p><i>The NHS is a huge organisation and what is offered may vary locally, so please do check with your GP what is available. You may find that some services are able to offer more. There may also be local third party organisations that can offer more for a very low rate or even free.</i></p> <p><i>If only ten sessions are on offer, this may not be enough – as we have said, everyone's journey is unique, and for some people a few sessions may be all that they need. However, for many people, it takes time to build trust and to develop a sense of safety – being clear at the beginning about how many sessions and whether you can contact the therapist between sessions is very important.</i></p> <p><i>We believe very passionately that survivors should be able to get all the help they need and we all need to put pressure on local commissioning groups (these are the organisations that decide what to fund) to make sure they are thinking about the needs of survivors in their areas. We also need to keep the pressure up on politicians too – mental health is being</i></p>

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ANBU UK Tamil Society event- Interactive questions and answers

		<p><i>discussed much more, and many MPs have been great champions. We need to build on this work and make sure that the needs of survivors are heard so that everyone can get the help they need.</i></p>
50	<p>A lot of the time my anxiety and depression manifested into physical pain. How can I ease this? Painkillers usually don't really do the trick</p>	<p><i>The area of persistent pain is a complicated one – both physical and psychological factors are involved in the causes and experience of pain. I would recommend to anyone that they look more into pain management courses. Some areas offer mindfulness-based approaches to help manage pain, or there may be Expert Patient Programmes (EPP) available to you. I usually rely on Google to find out what's available locally!</i></p> <p><i>There are some ideas for pain management here https://www.paintoolkit.org/</i></p> <p><i>Do also have a look at ANBU video on impacts on the impact of sexual abuse on the body (in Tamil and English): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MFxQJOSQrSq</i></p> <p><i>It's really important to be careful not to assume that your pain is 'just' caused by your anxiety and depression – we know that these things make pain worse, but there is always a physiological basis for pain. There is a good article here with some suggestions for why persistent pain conditions are linked to abuse https://www.bestthinking.com/articles/medicine/psychiatry_and_neurology/psychosomatic_medicine/chronic-pain-in-adult-survivors-of-childhood-abuse</i></p> <p><i>It's really hard managing anxiety, depression and pain – we wish you all the best on your journey!</i></p>
51	<p>Where/how do you find a therapist</p>	<p><i>Please do see our signposted organisations. There is dedicated counselling therapy available. Please also consult Survivors trust and NAPAC for more information.</i></p>
52	<p>Once a perpetrator has gone to prison and is then released, are they monitored?</p>	<p><i>All convicted sex offenders and perpetrators are placed on the national sex offenders register. All convicted sex offenders must register with the police, in person, within three days of their conviction or release from prison. They must continue this registration on an annual basis.</i></p> <p><i>They must give their name, date of birth, home address and national insurance number.</i></p> <p><i>Anyone getting a jail term of 30 months to life is subject to an indefinite term of registration. A sentence of 6 months to 30 months sees the offender get 10 years on the register and a sentence of under 6 months requires registration of up to 7 years. It is not limited only to offences against children. See more information here https://www.theguardian.com/society/2006/jan/18/childrenservices.politics1</i></p>
53	<p>Vathanee when and how did you open up about it to your partner</p>	<p><i>Vathanee: I opened up to my partner two years after meeting him, once I was certain he was the one. It was difficult as we were aware that something was affecting our intimacy, but neither of us really knew what it was until I disclosed to him.</i></p>
54	<p>If a conviction is achieved how many years does the</p>	<p><i>It is difficult to say. Each case is different. There is no hard and fast rule on sentencing; it is based on a number of factors, including the number of people filing against the perpetrator, which will help the prosecution. There is also an organisation</i></p>

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	perpetrator get? Do they have to get therapy themselves? What happens to their children?	<p>called STOP IT NOW https://www.stopitnow.org.uk/resources.htm that work with perpetrators. Any therapy will only help if someone enters into it open to change and to taking responsibility.</p> <p><i>Important to note that anyone convicted, cautioned or released from prison for a sexual offence will be put on the Sex Offenders register– if they are jailed for more than 30 months they will stay on the register for life. See more information here: https://www.theguardian.com/society/2006/jan/18/childrenservices.politics1</i></p> <p><i>It all depends on individual cases and family set up, it is difficult to advise what may or may not happen to the perpetrator's family.</i></p>
55	I was raped. I went to the police and NOTHING was done by them. They closed the case because it was abroad. What can you say about that or advise?	<p><i>We are sorry to her about your experience reporting rape and not having a satisfactory conclusion. This must have been very difficult to experience, but know that we believe you and you are being heard. It can be difficult to make a persecution from a different country, but we hope this does not deter you from pursuing your own healing.</i></p> <p><i>It takes a lot of courage to speak up and seek justice, whatever the outcome. The charity Victim Support is there to help victims of any crime, whether it has been reported or has gone to Court.</i></p> <p><i>Find out more here https://www.victimsupport.org.uk/help-and-support/how-we-can-help</i></p> <p><i>It is important to honour your own self care and find a way of not letting the perpetrator take away from your adulthood.</i></p>
56	What influence has the trauma induced by the civil war (particularly sexual abuse conducted by the SL army) had an effect on the Tamil community dealing with trauma ? See Q35	<p><i>It is difficult to make a link between sexual violence in Sri Lanka to childhood sexual abuse/sexual abuse within the Tamil community in the UK. This would require research and specifically looking at research participant's ,experience during the war. Of course the impact of migration alone can be traumatic.</i></p> <p><i>Right now ANBU UK is focused on the UK diaspora community. This would be an area we would like to investigate further.</i></p>
57	What's the point of go to court when you know your case won't get very far?	<i>Each survivor needs to make their own journey and do what is right for them. For some survivors to go through the process of reporting the abuse is an important step towards reinforcing the fact that it was wrong, regardless of the outcome. Going to court is not the only option. It is important that you are able to find your own path of justice.</i>
58	Did the survivors on the panel report their issue and have they got justice?	<i>Vathanee: I did reported it, I had to give video evidence and it was the only time I ever spoke about the abuse in such detail. I was lucky I got justice, but not sure you can get full closure.</i>
59	Do you think a survivor would be seen as weak if	<i>Each survivor needs to make their own journey and do what is right for them – no-one should judge another person for how they make that journey. For some survivors, forgiveness of the perpetrator is one outcome, but not for all. Everyone is</i>

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	they choose to forgive the perpetrator?	<i>different, and should be respected for the courage and strength they show in facing what has happened and healing. We have never met a weak survivor!</i>
60	What are some early warning signs that we can look for in childhood sexual abuse? See Q4	<i>Different people can react in different ways. However, some common indicators may be withdrawal from parents and peers, and on the other hand, becoming more clingy or wanting to be around their parents more and not so much others. Other signs include sexual behaviour that is not appropriate for their age (e.g. knowing things that haven't been taught at school), and/or there may also be physical signs such as soreness/bruises on their vagina/anus. NSPCC is a great resource for some more signs and indicators.</i>
61	How did the survivors on the panel tell their families?	<i>Vathanee: My sister knew when I told my partner. I told my mother a bit later when I decided to report it and gave her time to digest the information. I reached out to other close family members at that point too, but though they had a better understanding of the situation from mainstream media and Jimmy Saville case, there was not much concern or compassion. Jumani: It was very difficult especially as I was never close to my parents. I told my siblings and cousins first. After opening up so much, that gave me the courage to talk to my mum. It was very difficult at first because she didn't understand how it would have happened. I never once blamed her for any of it, because the that last thing you want to hear is that you failed as a parent. Me and my mother now have a very strong relationship.</i>
62	I have just started CBT but find it hard to tell my therapist about my past because I don't feel ready to deal with it	<i>You have taken the first steps on a very courageous journey. I would suggest that you take time and see how you feel in the relationship with your therapist. Take things gently and at a pace you can manage. See if you can work out what it is that holds you back from sharing</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Do you feel you can trust this therapist? If not, they may not be the right therapist for you. Or see how they react if you share something less upsetting about what happened – they should give you time to develop trust and show you that they are trustworthy.</i> • <i>If you trust them, are you worried that they will judge you, be shocked, and/or be upset? I have found that survivors are often very protective towards their therapists and don't want to distress them. Please be assured that a therapist will almost certainly have had similar conversations with other survivors and will also be getting supervision to help them deal with their feelings.</i> • <i>Are you worried that if you start to speak about it you will be overwhelmed/it will feel more real? This are very common fears. Maybe try writing it down first to share with them, or say to your therapist that these are your fears if you share something with them.</i> <p><i>You are just at the start of the journey – take it at the right pace for you, and don't feel that there is a timescale you have to work to. If you are in time limited therapy it might help to explain to your therapist that you have something to discuss but</i></p>

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		<i>you are feeling worried that it might take longer than the sessions you have available. You can then talk about options with them.</i>
63	Do you think the abuser should be hated for the rest of his/her life	<i>There is no right or wrong way of healing or dealing with a perpetrator. It is important not to put too much pressure on the journey. It is a personal choice to hate the perpetrator or to forgive them, and it is a place that you may or may not come to. The most important thing is to focus on your own healing and come to a place of self-compassion. You can then decide what is best for you – no-one else can walk your path or make those decisions for you.</i>
64	I feel like Dr Anuja described me to a T. How do I overcome this ?	<i>If you are feeling low, confide in someone and let them empower you to come out of your shell. If you are feeling anxious or angry, do breathing exercises, yoga, mindfulness and sports/exercise. Ensure you eat and sleep well. Get counselling, go to your GP and/or talk to people you trust. You can also contact helplines for extra support. You need to do everything you can to look after yourself and prioritise your needs before you put anyone else before you.</i>
65	Well Done ANBU 😊	<i>Thank you.</i>
66	It was a good event	<i>Thank you.</i>

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