

SUPPORT AFTER TRAUMA

Assessing the impact of Imara, a child sexual abuse (CSA) support programme in Nottingham

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INTRODUCTION

About Imara

[Imara](#) is a Community Interest Company based in Nottingham that offers early intervention support to children and young people and their families after their disclosure of child sexual abuse (CSA). The programme has been in existence for four years and provides early intervention advocacy, trauma therapeutic support, and close guidance throughout the criminal justice process. Most of the victims are referred to its service by the Child Abuse Investigation Unit at the Nottinghamshire Police. Imara's service is funded through grants from the [Big Lottery's Reaching Communities Fund](#), Help For Children UK, and the Police Innovation Fund, which is administered by the Home Office.

About the project

Imara and the Nottinghamshire police commissioned NPC to conduct a small-scale study to understand the impact of Imara's work. The aim was to assess the existence and extent of Imara's impact on victims, families, the police, and other stakeholders that the programme works with such as school teachers and social workers. This report discusses the findings of this research and covers five areas:

- background information on CSA and its effects on victims and families;
- research approaches used in this study;
- who Imara works with ie, victims and their families;
- services that Imara provides to victims, their families, the police and other stakeholders; and
- potential impact of Imara's services on victims, their families, the police and other stakeholders.

Summary of findings

Between 2010 and 2014, Imara has worked on 97 cases, supporting 323 individuals—victims, their parents and, often, the victim's grandparents. Based on the qualitative evidence, the provision of support Imara provides seems to have had positive short-to-medium-term impact, as well as long-term impact on victims and their families.

Our research found that Imara helps victims and their families with their feelings of isolation and despair. Its services enabled some victims to start trusting people again, and helped them open up about their feelings. It also helped victims to participate in the criminal justice process—giving evidence in court, for example, or having a medical examination. Furthermore, Imara supported victims and their families to rebuild trust and improve broken relationships at home. Parents of victims who were able to move on with their lives attributed some of their positive progress directly to Imara.

Imara's work enabled police officers to dedicate more time to the case investigation, and helped the police to improve evidence availability by making victims feel more comfortable about giving evidence. This is potentially associated with a higher proportion of cases being taken to court (41% of Imara cases versus 30% of non-Imara cases. See figure 10, page 17).

For other stakeholders, including school teachers and social workers, Imara helped to bridge a gap in support. For instance, Imara's ability to effectively communicate with young victims and provide emotional support was recognised by other stakeholders as an essential value of the service.

Across all stakeholder groups, Imara was acknowledged as an organisation adhering to professional communication standards, a reliable and committed partner of choice and, in the case of victims and their families, a trusted friend.

THE EFFECTS OF CSA

Child sexual abuse can have devastating consequences. It is not just the physical act of abuse itself, but what follows which can be potentially deeply disruptive and devastating for a victim and their entire family—including a victim's own future children.

Consequences for the victim

The potential consequences of CSA can include acute feelings of betrayal, powerlessness, stigmatisation, guilt and traumatic sexualisation, as well as difficulties forming and maintaining relationships, mental health related problems resulting from trauma, and physical health problems.¹

The immediate potential consequences of CSA on a victim are:

- depression;
- anxiety;
- reduced confidence/self-esteem;
- reduced well-being;
- PTSD (Post traumatic stress disorder);
- feeling of isolation; and
- decline in ability to communicate with others and express oneself.

These effects can be long-lasting and continue well into adulthood. One reason why CSA tends to have long-term consequences is because the majority of cases remain undisclosed and support is not provided in time. When a case is reported, often it is some time after the abuse took place.² This delayed disclosure means most children and young people are unable to access timely treatment. Trauma that is not dealt with can lead to further problems in life. In turn, some of these consequences will lead to others including self-harm, feeling suicidal, alcohol and drug misuse, falling behind at school or university, and estranged family relationships.

Consequences for the victim's family

Most of these adverse consequences will also be felt by a victim's parent or guardian. Impact on parents or guardians often revolve around feeling a loss of control, a lack of support, and not feeling calm or safe. Parents or guardians can often feel overwhelmed and powerless. They might find it difficult to maintain normal relationships with other family members, and feeling estranged and isolated is common. These experiences can also lead to excessive alcohol/drug consumption. So when we talk about CSA consequences, it is paramount to consider the effects on the victim as well as parents or guardians and the entire family.

¹ Meadows, P. *et al* (2011)

² Allnock, D. and Hynes, P. (2012)

RESEARCH APPROACH

We collected quantitative and qualitative data from Imara and the police, and conducted interviews with several different stakeholder groups. We used the police data to draw comparisons between Imara and non-Imara cases, and used Imara's data and our additional research to understand the context in which the programme operates, as well as its potential impact. Below we explain our approach.³

Data collected by Imara

Imara had a mix of quantitative and qualitative data on its beneficiaries:

- Case data on victims (eg, age and gender of victim, nature of abuse, perpetrator's relationship to victim, legal outcome). Our analysis was based on 97 cases relating to 118 victims (113 children and five adults) and covered a period of four years (2010–2014).⁴
- Results from three measurement tools currently used by Imara: a tool based on the [Outcome Star model](#),⁵ an Impact of Events Scale for victims and parents or guardians, and a goal based individual measure.
- Activity logs ie, total number of monthly calls and meetings that Imara had with victims, families, police, and other stakeholders.
- Testimonials from victims, families, police, and other stakeholders. These were presented in several forms, including the results of a follow up questionnaire with victims and families, stakeholder feedback forms, and individual case studies.
- Five qualitative interviews with school teachers and social workers (including Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services staff). These interviews were based on an interview topic guide we prepared, and were conducted and written up by a researcher employed by Imara.

Data collected from the police

Police provided anonymous data on 46 Imara and 1,256 non-Imara victims between 2009/2010 and 2013/2014.⁶ The type of information included the nature of abuse, age and gender of a victim, and legal data.

³ As part of the analysis, all the quantitative data was cleaned to address any inconsistencies.

⁴ It's important to emphasize here that Imara supports not only victims but also their families. Imara worked with 323 people over that same period of time, 37% of which were the referred victims. The rest (63%) were mostly parents/grandparents supporting those victims.

⁵ <http://www.outcomesstar.org.uk/>

⁶ Imara cases were filtered by looking for the word Imara in the title and the main description body of a case. The initial report run by the police gave 126 records with evidence of support from Imara. Out of those, 94 records were investigated by the Nottingham City Child Abuse Investigation Team. 72 of these had an associated crime reference with them. Of those 72 offences, 52 related to offences that occurred strictly in the city. Of those 52, three were Violence Against the Person (VAP) offences ie, non-sexual offences, leaving us with 49 sexual offences. Three cases out of 49 were missing ages at the time of abuse and disclosure. This gave us the final sample of 46 victims. Non-Imara victims totalled 1,574 over the same period of time, but this number includes cases when CSA was only disclosed in adulthood, whilst the cases identified as having support from Imara all related to victims who were 19 years old or younger at the time of disclosure. It should be noted that Imara's general remit is to work with anyone who is four years old or older at the time of disclosure. There is no upper limit. Out of 118 victims referred to and registered by Imara directly, a small proportion (4%) were over the age of 19 (29–44)—but these were not identified in the police sample. In order to ensure comparability of the police data, we hence excluded 318 victims with an age of disclosure over 19.

As we discuss later, Imara victims were restricted to Nottingham only, while non-Imara extended beyond the city and into the county. Non-Imara cases also covered a wider age group of people at the time of CSA disclosure, while Imara mainly focus on young victims between the age of six and 19.⁷

Data collected by NPC

We visited Imara in Nottingham and conducted face-to-face interviews with two parents and a grandparent of victims, two police representatives and Imara's own staff. The victim's family interview was conducted as a triad, while the police interview was a paired one.

All the data in this report has been fully anonymised. Where quotes are used, all original names and locations have been changed.

⁷ Imara made up at least 4% of all CSA victims recorded by the Nottinghamshire police in that period (46 victims). This is a lower number than the total of child victims supported by Imara in the same period (113). This will be partly due to Imara working with some victims transferred to other police forces, or not being identified as associated with sexual abuse in the criminal justice system, but it is also possible that Imara cases were not identified as such in the police data.

IMARA'S SERVICES

Imara provides early intervention support to victims of CSA and their families in Nottingham. It was set up in 2010 following identification of a gap in service provision. Before Imara, support to children and families in Nottingham affected by child sexual abuse was limited—placing extra demand on police officers and affecting the progression of criminal investigations.

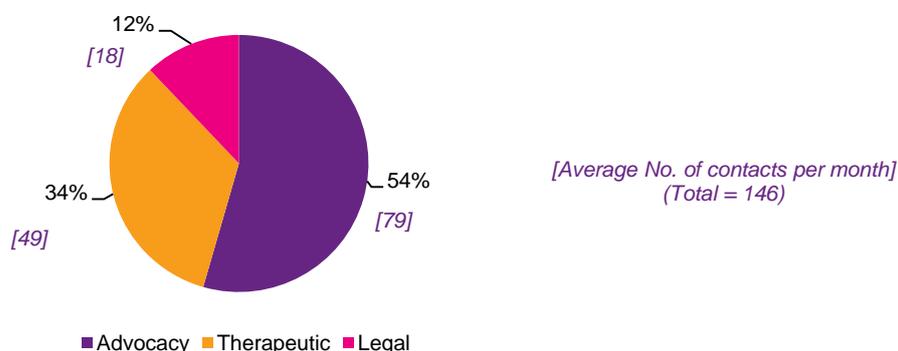
Imara offers information, advocacy and advice services, consistent contact throughout the judicial process, specialist assessment and referral to other support agencies, as well as support in accessing pre-trial therapy where required. Contact between a victim and Imara takes place when a victim in need of its service is identified (typically by the police). Imara then commences work with that individual, tailoring what they do to meet the victim's needs.

Types of services

More than half of all contact Imara had with families was advocacy support⁸ (see figure 1). This included supporting a victim and their family by taking them to a doctor, helping them deal with school problems, getting access to appropriate benefits etc. A third of Imara's contact with victims and their families was therapeutic such as helping families deal with their emotions of guilt, anxiety or depression.

A relatively small proportion of contact (12%) was strictly legal, such as liaising with the police, supporting a victim to give evidence, or attending trial at courts with victims and families. However, the importance of legal support should not be underestimated. Families described finding the criminal justice process obscure, lacking transparency, and hence often stressful. Families require support throughout proceedings to translate for them what is happening at all stages. This is the important gap that is filled by Imara through their legal support. Imara report that the instances of contact relating to legal support are often the most time-consuming.

Figure 1: Type of support provided by Imara



Source: Imara

Note: Mar–Jul 2014

⁸ Based on instances of contact rather than amount of time.

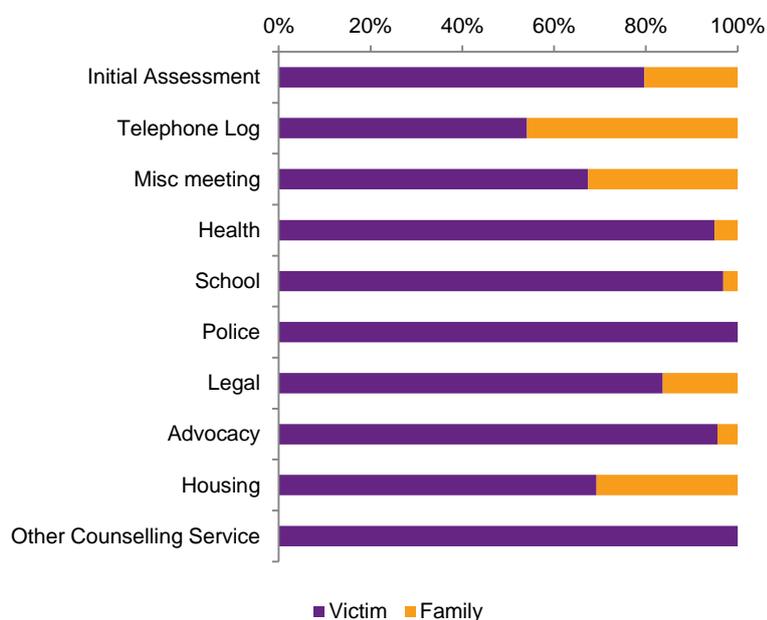
The support provided by Imara also covers an extended period of time ie, well beyond court hearings. Even when a perpetrator is found guilty, quite often there is a residual fear for victims and their families of what will happen when the perpetrator is released after serving their sentence. It is common for victims to have unexpected emotional outbursts that their families find difficult to cope with. Imara helps victims to understand their emotional reactions, rather than continue to be subsumed by feelings of blame or guilt. Imara helps them learn coping strategies, providing psychological education to normalise their feelings and thoughts, thus helping victims and families understand why these outbursts happen. This is part of the healing process. It helps victims and their families to not be overwhelmed or threatened by their emotions.

Working with stakeholders

As a result of its work, Imara also deals with other stakeholders including the police, school teachers, and social workers (see figure 2). Imara consults with the police throughout the criminal justice process regarding emotional needs of a victim. The Imara staff liaise between a victim and police, attend police meetings with a victim, and support the victim through the process of giving police statements which can be a traumatic experience. Sometimes Imara and the police run joint sessions with victims and families. Imara also works closely with school teachers, liaising with them on behalf of a young person and their family. It helps school staff better understand what a victim is going through, and to find strategies that will help them cope at school.

In an average month, Imara, with a small team of three full-time equivalent staff, had 146 different instances of contact with victims, their families, and other stakeholders (see figure 1). In the testimonials, many victims and family members mentioned that the support from Imara was readily accessible. This included evenings, nights and weekends. Others commented that they were able to get in touch even a few years after the support had 'officially' finished, through an occasional text, phone call, or a meeting.

Figure 2: Monthly contact support provided by Imara



Source: Imara

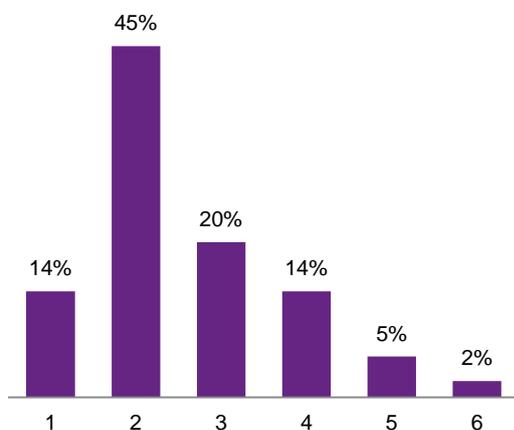
Note: Mar 2013–Feb 2014

IMARA'S BENEFICIARIES

Imara not only works with victims of CSA, but also their families. We have therefore identified two types of beneficiaries at Imara—direct and indirect. A **direct beneficiary** is a person who Imara works with directly. In most cases, Imara works with at least two people (see figure 3). In the majority of cases, this is a victim plus a parent or guardian. Quite often the latter can find themselves emotionally overwhelmed and unable to offer appropriate and sufficient support to a victim. It is also common for some parents, grandparents, or other members in a family (eg, elder siblings) to have also been sexually abused but not previously disclosed, often meaning they have never dealt with their own emotions.

An **indirect beneficiary** is somebody who is related to a direct beneficiary—usually part of their family—but does not have a direct contact with Imara. An example of an indirect beneficiary could be a partner of a parent or guardian who is looking after a victim, or an uncle or aunt of a victim. These people might also find it difficult to cope with the situation, which can often lead to estranged family relationships and a feeling of isolation. By working with one or two parties (eg, the victim and a parent), Imara aims to help the wider family deal with the situation. Between 2010 and 2014 Imara worked with 323 direct and up to 258 indirect beneficiaries.⁹ The number of direct beneficiaries at times reached six individuals per case and indirect beneficiaries as many as ten (see figures 3 and 4).

Figure 3. Breakdown of the number of direct beneficiaries per case



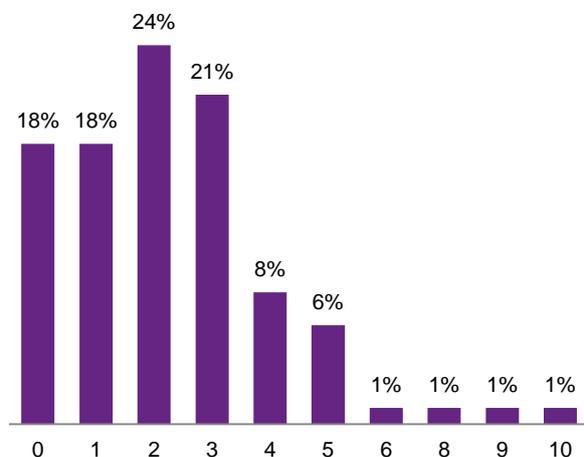
Source: Imara

Note: A direct beneficiary is somebody who Imara worked with directly ie, typically a victim or a parent/grandparent

Note: Indirect beneficiary is another family member who Imara did not work with directly but who may have benefited through an improved relationship with a direct beneficiary

Sample = 97 cases

Figure 4. Breakdown of the number of indirect beneficiaries per case



⁹ Indirect beneficiaries are identified by Imara in their conversations with victims and parents/grandparents (ie, direct beneficiaries) as 'the other family members' who have also benefited from Imara's support. This benefit may be as a result of an improved behaviour or mental health of a direct beneficiary.

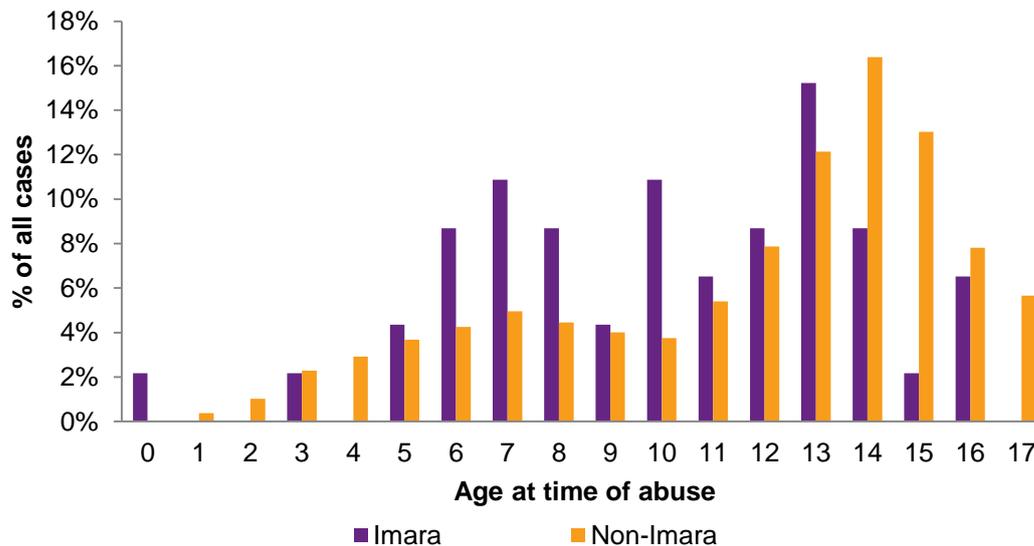
Who Imara supports

Victims of child sexual abuse

Between 2010 and 2014 Imara has worked on 97 cases, supporting 323 individuals—victims, their parents and, often, the victim's grandparents. Most of the cases were referred to Imara by the police. One in five cases had more than one victim referred (for instance two siblings, or a child and a parent/grandparent, both having been sexually abused by the same perpetrator). The vast majority (96%) of victims referred to Imara were children and young people between the ages of 6 and 19 at the time of disclosure.¹⁰ The remainder (4%) of victims were adults (that were typically associated with a case also involving a child victim).

A minimum of 4% of all CSA cases reported to the Nottinghamshire police between 2010 and 2014 were passed on to Imara.¹¹ On average, Imara worked with slightly younger victims than the police's non-Imara caseload. As shown in figure 5, Imara's cases show peaks in age at the time of abuse at ages 7, 10, and 13, while in non-Imara cases the most common age was 14. As noted earlier, Imara also only worked with Nottingham city cases (as opposed to county).

Figure 5. Age at the time of abuse of Imara and non-Imara victims



Source: Police

Note: Imara sample = 46 victims; Non-Imara sample = 1,256 victims

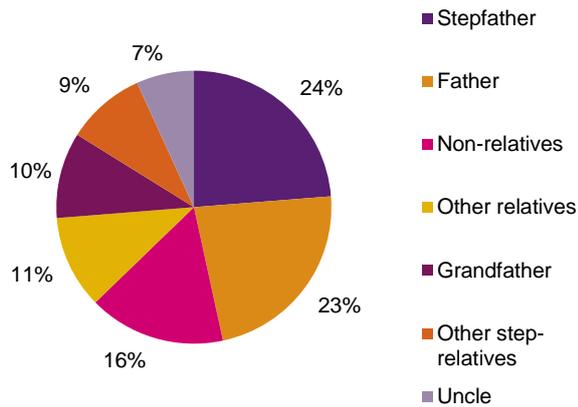
For almost half the victims referred to Imara, the perpetrator was either a father (23%) or a step-father (24%) (see figure 6). The next most common stand-alone category was a non-relative ie, someone who was neither a biological nor a step-relative of the victim. Overall, direct relatives (including grandfathers and uncles) accounted for half the cases (51%), followed by step-relatives (33%), and then non-relatives (16%).

Three-quarters of victims had experienced penetrative sexual abuse, whilst one in five had been through sexual abuse categorised as 'contact non-penetrative' (figure 7).

¹⁰ There were 113 child and five adult victims—118 in total (Source: Imara)

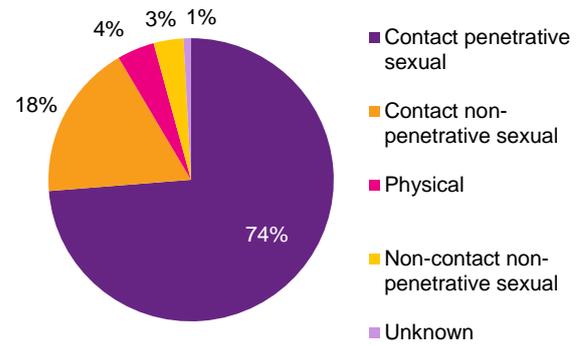
¹¹ We know that the percentage of cases referred is higher, but do not yet know the exact proportion, as not all Imara cases associated with the Nottinghamshire police were successfully identified in the police data.

Figure 6. Offender type



Source: Imara
 Note: Sample = 118 victims

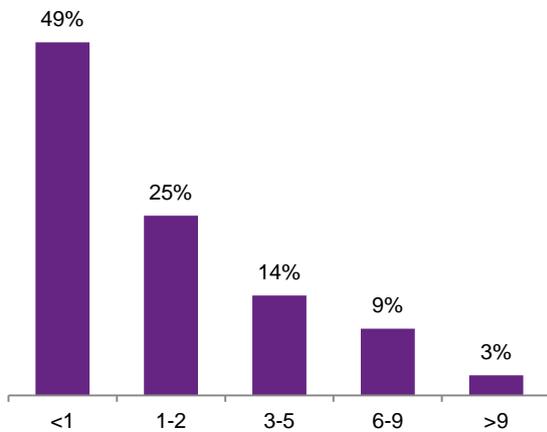
Figure 7: Type of sexual offence



Source: Imara
 Note: Sample = 118 victims

Half the children at Imara were sexually abused for a period of a year or more, with almost one in ten abused for at least six years (figure 8). Intra-familial abuse can make it particularly difficult for children to come forward. In some cases, the same victim has been abused by different offenders.

Figure 8: Breakdown of the duration (in years) of reported abuse per child victim



Source: Imara

Note: Sample = 108 child victims (five child victims did not have information on their age at the start and end of abuse. Hence the sample is 108, rather than 113)

More than eight in ten of the victims Imara supported had been exposed to domestic violence (84%).¹² Similarly, more than half of the victims (56%)¹³ had been exposed to substance misuse by either relatives or acquaintances.

The majority of victims (86%) were girls.¹⁴ About nine in ten victims that Imara worked with were White British, and one in ten had a disability.

¹² Sample = 118 victims (Source: Imara)

¹³ Sample = 118 victims (Source: Imara)

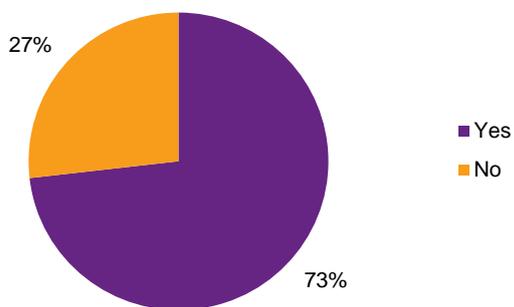
¹⁴ Sample = 118 victims (Source: Imara)

This demonstrates the diversity of victims that have been sexually abused and referred to Imara. It highlights that support may need to be adapted to respond to the importance of customising support to suit individual victims' needs accounting for gender, age, ethnicity, and any physical or learning disabilities.

Families of victims

While adult victims are only rarely directly referred to Imara, almost three quarters of victims' families have experienced some form of generational abuse (as shown in figure 9). In the majority of cases, sexual abuse has been going on for generations and may have started with a mother or a grandmother being abused, or a perpetrator being abused him/herself. It is common for adults who were abused to keep their case undisclosed for many years, until it affects their own children or grandchildren.

Figure 9. Proportion of cases with signs of generational abuse



Source: Imara

Note: Sample = 97 cases

IMARA'S IMPACT

This section discusses Imara's potential impact on different stakeholder groups. It is based on impact data that we collected directly from Imara and the police. However, due to some gaps in this data, we have to refer to this impact still as potential. Below we present the strongest available evidence based on data that is currently available.

Impact on victims and their families

Imara uses different tools to track progress on the well-being, anxiety and depression of their direct beneficiaries. There are a number of victims who in the past showed signs of particularly acute depression, obsession, compulsion, panic and social phobia. Imara uses tools like the [Outcome Star model](#), the Impact of Events Scale, the Revised Child's Anxiety and Depression Scale (RCADS), and a goal-based assessment tool to track change.

On average, we observed quite a lot of volatility in the results of these measures. However, this is common given the situation these victims and families are in and the emotional impact it has had on them. Emotional response and measures of change in levels of depression, anxiety, and well-being can be heavily impacted upon by external factors such as court hearings and giving evidence, and can therefore easily overshadow Imara's impact in that particular moment in time.¹⁵

We mostly relied on testimonials and qualitative interviews with beneficiaries and professionals to better understand the impact that Imara has had on their lives. A predominant message from beneficiaries was that Imara supported, listened to, and helped them. Imara's impact can be broken down into short to medium-term and long-term effects. Short to medium-term impact constitutes mainly helping victims and families to feel supported during a very difficult period in their lives, providing healing and instilling hope. More long-term impact involves helping the same beneficiaries to rebuild their lives and get on with living it as normally as possible in the given circumstances.

Short to medium-term impact

Victims and their parents/grandparents mentioned that Imara's services helped take away their feelings of isolation. This point particularly stood out in cases where a perpetrator was female, rather than male as is commonly presumed. In one such case, the (male) victim's father felt there was discrimination and stigmatisation around male victims where the perpetrator was female. The literature on sexuality and gender suggests that a victim's gender affects other people's response to them, including in cases of sexual abuse, such as the response of social workers or teachers.¹⁶ For example, the impact of CSA on a male victim may be viewed as less damaging than on a female victim, and hence less time and effort may be dedicated to support a male victim.

Police, teachers, and social workers all highlighted in their testimonials that Imara helped victims to open up. Before Imara's involvement, we were told, some victims refused to go for a medical examination or give evidence, but Imara's support enabled them to go forward with these stages of the process. This was not only beneficial for the victim in terms of supporting them, but in some cases this also helped to bring a case to a successful closure. We discuss this in more detail in the next sub-section on the police process.

¹⁵ Imara is reviewing its data collection approach and is planning to implement some improvements including an introduction of new measurement tools and outcomes areas (subject to funding).

¹⁶ Brayley, H. *et al* (2014)

Imara also helped to rebuild trust and mend broken or fragile family relationships, especially between victims and their parents/grandparents, and between the latter and their own partners and other relatives.

Long-term impact

The support provided by Imara has helped victims and their families to rebuild their lives. Some are still on their journey towards this, but for others the services gave them an essential 'I can do this' survival attitude. What happened to the victims and their families cannot be erased or forgotten, but it can be accepted.

A father of a male victim commented:

'[Imara] really helped [his son], sorted him out. He now lives...with his nan, is going to college and has a job.'

Police and other stakeholders also noticed enduring change in victims and their families. A detective constable from the Nottinghamshire police noted:

'Despite a "not guilty" verdict, recent communication with [the] mother suggests she is empowered by her own actions and strong enough to move on and protect her children, and I have no doubt some of this can be attributed to the work of Imara.'

What makes Imara successful?

Based on testimonials and interviews, we have drawn out six key reasons why Imara has been able to make a positive and enduring impact on victims' and families' lives:

1. Putting the victim first
2. Providing holistic support for the entire family
3. Communicating professionally
4. Delivering hands-on support
5. Developing a trusting, friendly relationship
6. Being readily accessible and over long-term

Putting the victim first

When a person is so highly traumatised (especially emotionally), as in CSA cases, it is paramount to put their needs first to make a positive impact. However, in practice, it is not uncommon for the legal process to put a perpetrator first. This is usually a result of weaknesses in the criminal justice system eg, a lack of timely access to information for victims and families that makes it more intimidating for victims to come out and give evidence. By deterring a victim from speaking out, it works in favour of a perpetrator. A number of police officers picked up on this fact and mentioned that Imara put the victim first.

Providing holistic support for the entire family

Parents and grandparents of a victim often feel guilt when they learn that their child or grandchild has been sexually abused. They often blame themselves for letting it happen, but do not know how to cope with these emotions. This is exacerbated further in cases where parents, grandparents or other members in the family were sexually abused themselves in the past but suffered in silence. Providing support to them is very important and in the end benefits victims too.

Communicating professionally

Going through court proceedings can be an incredibly traumatising experience for victims and their family. Imara was described as being good at translating the legal or official language into words that are more easily understood by victims and their families. This helps to put the latter at ease and enables them to understand what is happening throughout the process.

Delivering hands-on support

The support provided by Imara is very hands-on and practical. The service is available for victims and families whenever necessary, including accompanying victims to court or for a medical assessments and liaising on victims' behalf with the police, school, doctors etc.

'They are the supporting scaffolding wrapped sensitively around us, they are the plaster and cement; generously filling in all the gaps. Without their help some of us would surely have crumbled.'

A parent of a victim

Developing a trusting, friendly relationship

Imara's service is friendly, approachable and supportive. Several victims and families commented that Imara is a place where they genuinely felt cared for and where they could speak about anything.

The ability to build a trusting relationship with victims and their families partly comes from the permanence of Imara's staff. Imara is a small organisation run by committed individuals and there is very little staff turnover. This is particularly important for victims and their families who find it traumatising to build new relationships with new professionals. Several of these families commented that at other support agencies they often had to adapt to new case workers and found it unnerving.

Being readily accessible and over long-term

In testimonials, victims and families noted how Imara's staff always made themselves available to victims and their families—whether it was night or day or several years after the support had finished. This gave victims and families the unconditional support that they sometimes needed.

Impact on the police

We have been able to compare the criminal justice outcomes of Imara cases to non-Imara cases, using police data.¹⁷

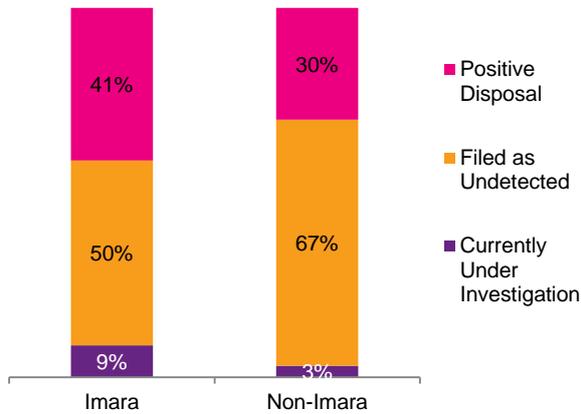
Higher proportion of cases taken to court

Imara cases show a higher rate of successful results from the point of view of the victim in comparison to non-Imara cases. In Imara cases, 41% of perpetrators received a charge or a summons (known as positive disposal), in comparison to 30% in non-Imara cases (see figure 10). However we do not have enough evidence to know how much of this difference is attributable to the support of Imara versus differences in the nature of cases being referred to Imara.

About half of Imara cases who received a charge pleaded guilty and the other non-guilty. But of those who pleaded non-guilty, the majority then went on to receive a guilty verdict (see figure 11).

¹⁷ We only used non-Imara cases which matched the age disclosure range of Imara cases ie, 19 years and under. Please see footnote 6 for a full explanation.

Figure 10. Status comparison of Imara and non-Imara cases



Source: Police

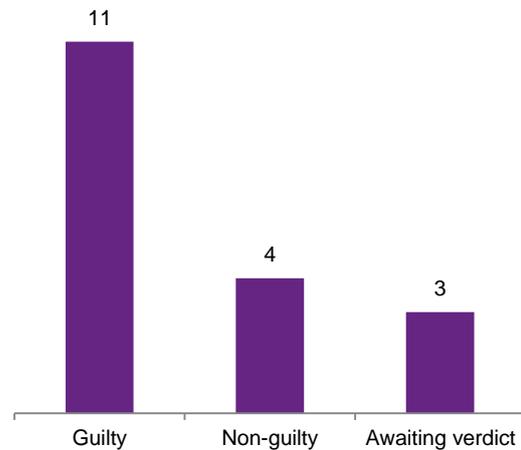
Note: Sample = 46 Imara and 1,256 non-Imara cases.

Note: Positive disposal means a charge or a summons.

Note: Undetected means a report was not taken forward.

Data covers 2010/2011–2013/2014

Figure 11. Verdict among those who pleaded non-guilty



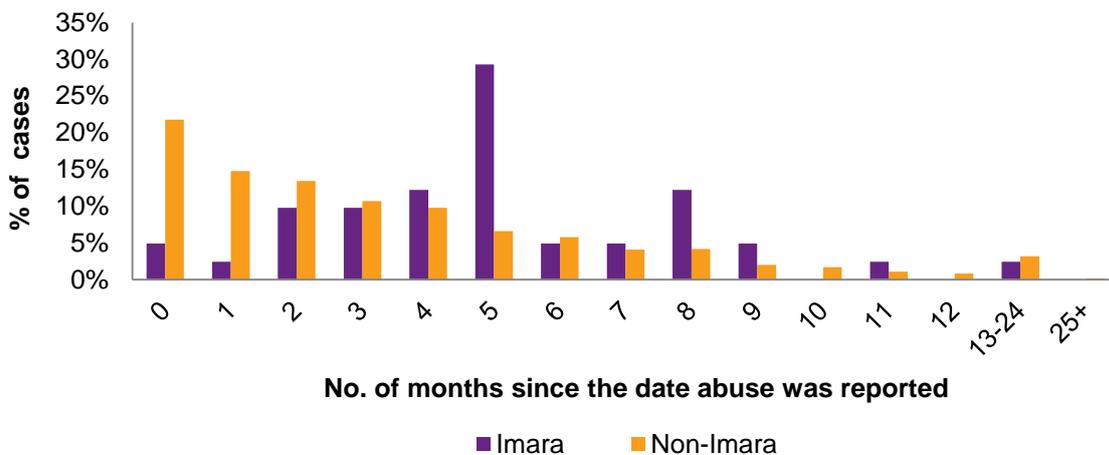
Source: Imara

Note: Sample = 18 perpetrators who pleaded non-guilty (between 2010/2011 and 2013/2014)

Enabling the police to focus more on their investigation

The number of police officers assigned are very similar between Imara and non-Imara cases—typically one or two police or investigation officers. However, on average Imara cases were open for one month longer than non-Imara (five versus four months respectively—see figure 12). This may be a reflection of Imara supporting the exploration of new avenues to bring a perpetrator to justice, and hence cases being kept open for longer—which would tie in with the higher proportion of Imara cases being taken to court. Further data collection is required to reach a better understanding of the reasons behind the differences in the length of time cases are kept open.

Figure 12. Number of months CSA police case was open for Imara cases and non-Imara cases



Source: Police

Note: Sample = 41 Imara and 1,198 non-Imara cases. Based on cases that have been either filed as undetected or where a perpetrator received a charge or a summons, minus those that were missing data (one of Imara's and 19 of non-Imara's). We can only show aggregate results (rather than split them into the two categories above) because sample sizes for Imara cases are too small to be analysed separately.

What the above data on case duration and number of police officers does not capture is the number of hours that assigned police officers spend on each case. Hence from this data alone we cannot conclude if police officers working with Imara had more time to focus on their investigation in comparison to non-Imara cases. In the testimonials and qualitative interviews, police officers were very positive about Imara's work, and did comment that it helped them to save time and to focus more on the investigation:

'It has enabled me to invest more time on the investigation and prosecution of these serious crimes, knowing that the victims are being fully emotionally supported by Imara. Their support during criminal trials has also proved invaluable.'

Police officers who worked with Imara also commented on a high level of consistency when working together—especially in comparison to other services. A high turnover rate at some other services meant that quite often police officers were not working with the same people. Each time a new person came on board, it required time to build a new relationship, resulting in loss of time to put towards the investigation itself.

Improving evidence availability

From the testimonials of individual police officers, we learnt that, without Imara's support, some cases would possibly have not gone to court. In addition to focusing more on investigation (as discussed above), police officers also highlighted how Imara's ability to build a trusting relationship with a victim resulted in that victim giving evidence or going ahead with a medical examination, which increased the chance of getting a case to court in the first place.

Impact on other stakeholders

Imara also regularly works with school teachers and social workers. There are a number of factors that this group highlighted about Imara's work.

Professional communication and quick response

Many school teachers and social workers interviewed described Imara as a reliable partner, delivering professional communication with openness. Imara's commitment and willingness to work with everyone involved in the process was also noted, as well as their availability for discussions, and how regularly they kept everyone updated on progress made.

Bridging a skills gap

Some stakeholders—particularly teachers—openly admitted that Imara was able to offer the type of skills and support that they themselves could not provide. A social inclusion coordinator at a school mentioned:

'We have received specialist guidance and support in circumstances that we have not previously experienced. [Imara] has given us confidence to support additional young people in similar circumstances should the situation arise.'

A positive experience

Several interviewees commented that Imara provided a better service in comparison to other agencies they worked with. They noted that Imara offered a more positive experience and overcame some of their previous concerns around young victims' emotional health and well-being.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This report looked at the multiple stakeholders who have benefited from Imara's service and the nature of these benefits.

For **victims and their families**, the service supported them throughout the criminal justice process and helped them deal with their feelings of isolation and despair—enabling them to rebuild trust at home and move on with their lives.

For the **police**, Imara's service allowed the officers to dedicate more time to the case investigation. It improved the availability of evidence by supporting victims and making them feel more comfortable with giving evidence. This may have contributed to a higher proportion of cases being taken to court (41% of Imara cases versus 30 for non-Imara cases).¹⁸

For **other stakeholders**, including school teachers and social workers, Imara helped to bridge a skills gap, particularly in terms of the emotional support and effective communication with the victim.

In conclusion, we have the following recommendations, relating to Imara's impact measurement system and potential expansion of similar services.

Impact measurement system

Imara should aim to improve the quality of the data it collects in the following ways:

- streamline its Excel data collection and analysis, as the data is currently spread across different databases;
- improve the content and use of its beneficiary follow-up questionnaire to capture data on the impact in a more systematic way;
- investigate a more robust measurement approach to collecting quantitative data from victims, which is less susceptible to volatility in data points;
- investigate the association between victims accessing the Imara service and a higher rate of a case reaching court;¹⁹
- find a more accurate approach to identifying victims that receive support from Imara in police data; and
- explore the scope for better collection of data on victims and families from other stakeholders such as schools.

Imara's service appears to be an effective way of providing support to CSA victims. Its approach is to intervene as early as possible, (ie, soon after the abuse has taken place) to try and prevent things getting worse for the victim and their family. This early intervention model may contribute to significant cost savings to the government by minimising the emotional trauma and by improving the life chances for victims, such as achieving sustained employment in the future. There is therefore scope for further exploration of the cost savings Imara is helping achieve, based on the collection of more rigorous data as described above.

¹⁸ Though we need more detailed evidence to corroborate this

¹⁹ For example, through closer analysis of differences between cases referred to Imara versus non-Imara cases, and through qualitative research with victims and the police on the factors influencing likelihood of a case reaching court

Strategic planning

Many of the victims' families, police and school teachers that Imara worked with have suggested that Imara should expand their work to support more victims—by covering a wider geographic area (eg, the Nottinghamshire county) or by expanding into other types of abuse such as physical abuse and/or neglect. We do think this is worth considering because Imara's model appears to be effective— fulfilling a clear role in the system—and this report has identified promising evidence of impact.

However, it may be difficult to expand on a large scale whilst retaining the specialism, expertise and accessibility inherent to the service. Careful consideration of the implications of expansion will be required, and an improved measurement system will help Imara understand further where it has most impact and where the potential for growth is—enabling a greater proportion of victims to receive much needed support.

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