

Statistics decade in  
april 2011, sarah's  
law became



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Statistics in the UK show that parents should be concerned about child sex abuse, due to cases such as Sarah Payne, but also the amount of sexual offences against children that are recorded, and 90% being by someone the child knew (NSPCC 2018). Reports of sexual offences against children have raised in the UK (Bentley 2017).

However, there cannot be a definite and accurate number of statistics because in many cases such crimes are left unreported as the child can usually be too young, ashamed of what has happened or scared due to threats that have been made to them. Parents need to be vigilant around people who have access to their children. News of the world set up a campaign 'naming and shaming' but due to innocent people being attacked did not succeed (Silverman and Wilson 2002). After more than a decade in April 2011, Sarah's law became operational in England and Wales which allows members of the public to contact police to enquire if anyone in contact with their children pose a risk (Jones and Newburn 2013).

Sara Payne personified how the failure of the criminal justice system dealing with violent and dangerous criminals could destroy innocent lives and families (Charman and Savage 2009). As it unfolded that Whiting had previously been convicted of child sexual offences the News of the world launched crusade 'For Sarah' with the support of her mother Sara. They were demanding for the law to be changed for all paedophiles to receive a life sentence when convicted and for the government to pass 'Sarah's law' which would give parents the right to know if there is a paedophile living in their community, a law like this could have saved Sarah's life.

Greer and McLaughlin (2017) suggest that if paedophiles were serving lifetimes Sarah Payne's life would not have been taken. Aman called Roy Whiting was found guilty of the abduction and murder of Sarah, he denied his guilt but there was too much evidence to prove he was guilty.

Forensic tests shown that Sarah was in his car. On the 12th December 2001 Whiting received a life sentence and was recommended to serve a whole lifetime which was set at 30 years. However, Whiting also had previous convictions of sexual abuse charges on another eight-year-old girl where he was sentenced to four years in prison and only served half of his sentence. After his release in 1997 he was one of the first men to be put on the new sex offenders list.

Sarah Payne's murder was such a high-profile case and it changed so many aspects of the law and procedures (Newburn 2017). On the 2nd July 2000 an eight-year-old girl, Sarah Payne, was abducted in West Sussex. Sarah and her two brothers were out playing in a field when she was abducted. Her body was later found on the 17th July although it was in a state of decomposition and the cause of death could not be identified, it was later revealed that she was either strangled or suffocated (Newburn 2017). It was not until the early 1980s that there was an idea of sexual abuse of children as opposed to physical abuse, it started to gain recognition (Newburn 2017).